



## THE CHILDREN'S ILLUSTRATED CLASSICS

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### LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE and THE STORY OF A SHORT LIFE

By Mrs Ewing

RANDOLPH CALDECOTT illustrated '*Lob Lie-by-the-fire*' with line drawings

H. M. BROCK illustrated '*The Story of a Short Life*' with colour-plates

'There lingers over some people whom we know a nameless charm,' wrote an early admirer of these stories. 'A charm like this breathes over the stories which Mrs Ewing has left as an inheritance for English children, and their elders also for all time.' This charm lingers more powerfully over *Lob* than over any of Mrs Ewing's books, and wafts us back into a delectable past that recalls *Cranford*: but at Lingborough the spring wind is blowing, and strange things are happening to hold our attention from the first page to the last. It is the story of a founding, and of a Brownie—of the household elf '*Lob*'—woven together very charmingly in its period setting, and its cleverly drawn characters and plot are compelling and irresistible. There is enough mystery to keep us guessing, but the strength of the story lies in the telling, and the picture it presents of the vanished world of a little country place of a hundred years ago.

Charlotte Yonge, herself a distinguished author, considered this story to be among the best of Mrs Ewing's 'exquisite pieces'.

*The Story of a Short Life* uses the British Army background with which Mrs Ewing was so familiar, and is most poignant in its revelation of the suffering and courage of a spoilt child, 'whose dearest ambitions were never to be fulfilled'.

*A list of volumes in Dent's Children's Illustrated Classics will be found on the back of this wrapper*

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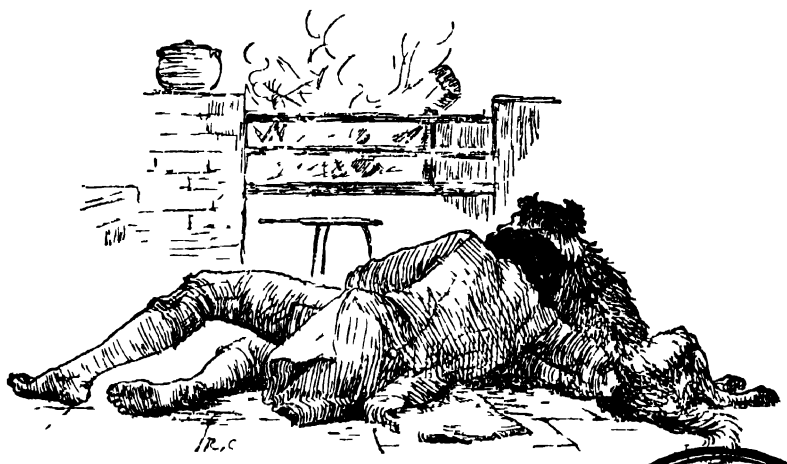


LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE  
*or*  
THE LUCK OF LINGBOROUGH

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THE STORY OF A SHORT LIFE

by  
MRS EWING



*With three colour plates by*  
H. M. BROCK  
*and line drawings in the text by*  
RANDOLPH C. DECOTT

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*LOB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE*

TO  
JAMES BOYN McCOMBIE, Esq.,  
OF ABERDEEN,

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS VERY AFFECTIONATELY  
DEDICATED

J. H. E.



## INTRODUCTORY

**L**OB LIE-BY-THE-FIRE—the Lubber-fiend, as Milton calls him—is a rough kind of Brownie or House Elf, supposed to haunt some north-country homesteads, where he does the work of the farm labourers, for no grander wages than

——to earn his cream-bowl duly set.

Not that he is insensible of the pleasures of rest, for

—When, in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn  
That ten day-labourers could not end,  
Then lies him down the Lubber-fiend,  
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,  
Basks at the fire his hairy strength.

It was said that a Lob Lie-by-the-fire once haunted the little old Hall at Lingborough. It was an old stone house on the Borders, and seemed to have got its tints from the grey skies that hung above it. It was cold-looking without, but cosy within, 'like a north-country heart', said Miss Kitty,

who was a woman of sentiment, and kept a commonplace book.

It was long before Miss Kitty's time that Lob Lie-by-the-fire first came to Lingborough. Why and whence he came is not recorded, nor when and wherefore he withdrew his valuable help, which, as wages rose, and prices rose also, would have been more welcome than ever.

This tale professes not to record more of him than comes within the memory of man.

Whether (as Fletcher says) he were the son of a witch, if curds and cream won his heart, and new clothes put an end to his labours, it does not pretend to tell. His history is less known than that of any other sprite. It may be embodied in some oral tradition that shall one day be found; but as yet the mists of forgetfulness hide it from the story-teller of today as deeply as the sea fogs are wont to lie between Lingborough and the adjacent coast.



## *The Little Old Ladies—Alms Done in Secret*

THE LITTLE old ladies of Lingborough were heiresses. Not, mind you, in the sense of being the children of some mushroom millionaire, with more money than manners, and (as Miss Betty had seen with her own eyes, on the daughter of a manufacturer who shall be nameless) dresses so fine in quality and be-furbelowed in construction as to cost a good quarter's income (of the little old ladies), but trailed in the dirt from 'beggarly extravagance', or kicked out behind at every step by feet which fortune (and a very large fortune too) had never taught to walk properly.

'And how should she know how to walk?' said Miss Betty. 'Her mother can't have taught her, poor body! that ran through the streets of Leith, with a creel on her back, as a lassie; and got out of her coach (lined with satin, you mind, sister Kitty?) to her dying day, with a bounce, all in a heap, her dress caught, and her stockings exposed (among ourselves, ladies!) like some good wife that's afraid to be late for the market. Aye, aye! Malcolm Midden—good man!—made a fine pocket of silver in a dirty trade, but his women'll jerk, and toss, and bounce, and fuss, and fluster for a generation or two yet, for all the silks and satins he can buy 'em.'

From this it will be seen that the little old ladies inherited some prejudices of their class, and were also endowed with a shrewdness of observation common among all classes of north-country women.

But to return to what else they inherited. They were heiresses, as the last representatives of a family as old in that Border country as the bold blue hills which broke its horizon. They were heiresses also in default of heirs male to their father, who got the land from his uncle's dying childless—

sons being scarce in the family. They were heiresses, finally, to the place and the farm, to the furniture that was made when folk seasoned their wood before they worked it, to a diamond brooch which they wore by turns, besides two diamond rings, and two black lace shawls, that had belonged to their mother and their Auntie Jean, long since departed thither where neither moth nor rust corrupt the true riches.

As to the incomings of Lingborough, 'It was nobody's business but their own,' as Miss Betty said to the lawyer who was their man of business, and whom they consulted on little matters of rent and repairs at as much length, and with as much formal solemnity, as would have gone elsewhere to the changing hands of half a million of money. Without violating their confidence, however, we may say that the estate paid its way, kept them in silk stockings, and gave them new tabbiset dresses once in three years. It supplied their wants the better that they had inherited house plenishing from their parents, 'which they thanked their stars was not made of tag-rag, and would last their time', and that they were quite content with an old home and old neighbours, and never desired to change the grand air that blew about their native hills for worse, in order to be poisoned with bad butter, and make the fortunes of extortionate lodging-house keepers.

The rental of Lingborough did more. How much more the little old ladies did not know themselves, and no one else shall know, till that which was done in secret is proclaimed from the house tops.

For they had had a religious scruple, founded upon a literal reading of the scriptural command that a man's left hand should not know what his right hand gives in alms, and this scruple had been ingeniously set at rest by the parson, who, failing in an attempt to explain the force of eastern hyperbole to the little ladies' satisfaction, had said that Miss Betty, being the elder, and the head of the house, might be likened to the right hand, and Miss Kitty, as the

younger, to the left, and that if they pursued their good works without ostentation, or desiring the applause even of each other, the spirit of the injunction would be fulfilled.

The parson was a good man and a clever. He had (as Miss Betty justly said) a very spiritual piety. But he was also gifted with much shrewdness in dealing with the various members of his flock. And his word was law to the sisters.

Thus it came about that the little ladies' charities were not known even to each other—that Miss Betty turned her morning camlet twice instead of once, and Miss Kitty denied herself in sugar, to carry out benevolent little projects which were accomplished in secret, and of which no record appears in the Lingborough Ledger.

### *At Tea with Mrs Dunmaw*

THE LITTLE ladies of Lingborough were very sociable, and there was, as they said, 'as much gaiety as was good for anyone' within their reach. There were at least six houses at which they drank tea from time to time, all within a walk. As hosts or guests, you always met the same people, which was a friendly arrangement, and the programmes of the entertainments were so uniform that no one could possibly feel awkward. The best of manners and home-made wines distinguished these tea-parties, where the company was strictly genteel, if a little faded. Supper was served at nine, and the parson and the lawyer played whist for love with different partners on different evenings with strict impartiality.

Small jealousies are apt to be weak points in small societies, but there was a general acquiescence in the belief that the parson had a friendly preference for the little ladies of Lingborough.

He lived just beyond them, too, which led to his invariably escorting them home. Miss Betty and Miss Kitty would not for worlds have been so indelicate as to take this attention for granted, though it was a custom of many years' standing. The older sister always went through the form of asking the younger to 'see if the servant had come', and at this signal the parson always bade the lady of the house good night, and respectfully proffered his services as an escort to Lingborough.

It was a lovely evening in June when the little ladies took tea with the widow of General Dunmaw, at her cottage not quite two miles from their own home.

It was a memorable evening. The tea-party was an agreeable one. The little ladies had new tabbinets on, and Miss

Kitty wore the diamond brooch. Miss Betty had played whist with the parson, and the younger sister (perhaps because of the brooch) had been favoured with a good deal of conversation with the lawyer. It was an honour, because the lawyer bore the reputation of an *esprit fort*, and was supposed to have, as a rule, a contempt for feminine intellects, which good manners led him to veil under an almost officious politeness in society. But honours are apt to be uneasy blessings, and this one was at least as harassing as gratifying. For a somewhat monotonous vein of sarcasm, a painful power of producing puns and a dexterity in suggesting doubt of everything, were the main foundation of his intellectual reputation, and Miss Kitty found them hard to cope with. And it was a warm evening.

But women have much courage, especially to defend a friend or a faith, and the less Miss Kitty found herself prepared for the conflict the harder she esteemed it her duty to fight. She fought for Church and State, for parsons and poor people, for the sincerity of her friends, the virtues of the Royal Family, the merit of Dr Drugson's prescriptions, and for her favourite theory that there is some good in everyone and some happiness to be found everywhere.

She rubbed nervously at the diamond brooch with her thin little mittened hands. She talked very fast; and if the lawyer were guilty of feeling any ungallant indifference to her observations, she did not so much as hear his, and her cheeks became so flushed that Mrs Dunmaw crossed the room in her China crape shawl and said, 'My dear Miss Kitty, I'm sure you feel the heat very much. Do take my fan, which is larger than yours.'

But Miss Kitty was saved a reply, for at this moment Miss Betty turned on the sofa, and said, 'Dear Kitty, will you kindly see if the servant——'

And the parson closed the volume of *Friendship's Offering* which lay before him, and advanced towards Mrs Dunmaw and took leave in his own dignified way.

Miss Kitty was so much flustered that she had not even presence of mind to look for the servant, who had never been ordered to come, but the parson relieved her by saying in his round, deep voice: 'I hope you will not refuse me the honour of seeing you home, since our roads happen to lie together.' And she was glad to get into the fresh air, and beyond the doubtful compliments of the lawyer's nasal suavity: 'You have been very severe upon me tonight, Miss Kitty. I'm sure I had no notion I should find so powerful an antagonist,' etc.

## *Midsummer Eve—A Lost Diamond*

**I**T WAS Midsummer Eve. The long light of the North was pale and clear, and the western sky shone luminous through the fir-wood that bordered the road. Under such dim lights colours deepen, and the great bushes of broom, that were each one mass of golden blossom, blazed like fairy watch-fires up the lane.

Miss Kitty leaned on the left arm of the parson and Miss Betty on his right. She chatted gaily, which left her younger sister at leisure to think of all the convincing things she had not remembered to say to the lawyer, as the evening breeze cooled her cheeks.

‘A grand prospect for the crops, sir,’ said Miss Betty; ‘I never saw the broom so beautiful.’ But as she leaned forward to look at the yellow blaze which foretells good luck to farmers, as it shone in the hedge on the left-hand side of the road, she caught sight of the brooch in Miss Kitty’s lace shawl. Through a gap in the wood the light from the western sky danced among the diamonds. But where one of the precious stones should have been, there was a little black hole.

‘Sister, you’ve lost a stone out of your brooch!’ screamed Miss Betty. The little ladies were well trained, and even in that moment of despair Miss Betty would not hint that her sister’s ornaments were not her sole property.

When Miss Kitty burst into tears the parson was a little astonished as well as distressed. Men are apt to be so, not perhaps because women cry on such very small accounts, as because the full reason does not always transpire. Tears are often the climax of nervous exhaustion, and this is commonly the result of more causes than one. Ostensibly Miss Kitty was ‘upset’ by the loss of the diamond, but she also wept

away a good deal of the vexation of her unequal conflict with the sarcastic lawyer, and of all this the parson knew nothing.

Miss Betty knew nothing of that, but she knew enough of things in general to feel sure that the diamond was not all the matter.



‘What is amiss, sister Kitty?’ said she. ‘Have you hurt yourself? Do you feel ill? Did you know the stone was out? I hope you’re not going to be hysterical, sister Kitty,’ added Miss Betty anxiously; ‘there never was a hysterical woman in our family yet.’

‘Oh dear no, sister Betty,’ sobbed Miss Kitty; ‘but it’s



all my fault. I know I was fidgeting with it whilst I was talking; and it's a punishment on my fidgety ways, and for ever presuming to wear it at all, when you're the head of the family, and solely entitled to it. And I shall never forgive myself if it's lost, and if it's found I'll never, never wear it any more.' And as she deluged her best company pocket-handkerchief (for the useful one was in a big pocket under her dress, and could not be got at, the parson being present), Church, State, the Royal Family, the family Bible, her highest principles, her dearest affections and the diamond brooch, all seemed to swim before her disturbed mind in one sea of desolation.

There was not a kinder heart than the parson's towards women and children in distress. He tucked the little ladies again under his arms, and insisted upon going back to Mrs Dunmaw's, searching the lane as they went. In the pulpit or the drawing-room a ready anecdote never failed him, and on this occasion he had several. Tales of lost rings, and even single gems, recovered in the most marvellous manner and the most unexpected places—dug up in gardens, served up to dinner in fishes and so forth.

'Never,' said Miss Kitty, afterwards, 'never, to her dying day, could she forget his kindness.'

She clung to the parson as a support under both her sources of trouble, but Miss Betty ran on and back, and hither and thither, looking for the diamond. Miss Kitty and the parson looked too, and how many aggravating little bits of glass and silica, and shining nothings and good-for-nothings there are in the world, no one would believe who has not looked for a lost diamond on a high road.

But another story of found jewels was to be added to the parson's stock. He had bent his long back for about the eighteenth time, when such a shimmer as no glass or silica can give flashed into his eyes, and he caught up the diamond out of the dust, and it fitted exactly into the little black hole.

Miss Kitty uttered a cry, and at the same moment Miss

Betty, who was farther down the road, did the same, and these were followed by a third, which sounded like a mocking echo of both. And then the sisters rushed together.

'A most miraculous discovery!' gasped Miss Betty.

'You must have passed the very spot before!' cried Miss Kitty.

'Though I'm sure, sister, what to do with it now we have found it I don't know,' said Miss Betty, rubbing her nose, as she was wont to do when puzzled.

'It shall be taken better care of for the future, sister Betty,' said Miss Kitty penitently. 'Though how it got out I can't think now.'

'Why, bless my soul! you don't suppose it got there of itself, sister?' snapped Miss Betty. 'How it did get there is another matter.'

'I felt pretty confident about it, for my own part,' smiled the parson as he joined them.

'Do you mean to say, sir, that you knew it was there?' asked Miss Betty solemnly.

'I didn't know the precise spot, my dear madam, but——'

'You didn't see it, sir, I hope?' said Miss Betty.

'Bless me, my dear madam, I found it!' cried the parson.

Miss Betty bridled and bit her lip. 'I never contradict a clergyman, sir,' said she, 'but I can only say that if you did see it, it was not like your usual humanity to leave it lying there.'

'Why (I've got it in my hand, ma'am!'  
(He's got it in his hand, sister!'

cried the parson and Miss Kitty in one breath.

Miss Betty was too much puzzled to be polite. 'What are you talking about?' she asked.

'The diamond, oh dear, oh dear! *The diamond!*' cried Miss Kitty. 'But what are you talking about, sister?'

'*The Baby!*' said Miss Betty.

### *What Miss Betty Found*

**I**T WAS found under a broom bush. Miss Betty was poking her nose near the bank that bordered the wood, in her hunt for the diamond, when she caught sight of a mass of yellow of a deeper tint than the mass of broom blossom above it, and this was the baby.

This vivid colour, less opaque than 'deep chrome' and a shade more orange, seems to have a peculiar attraction for wandering tribes. Gipsies use it, and it is a favourite colour with Indian squaws. To the last dirty rag it is effective, whether it flutters near a tent on Bagshot Heath, or in some wigwam doorway makes a point of brightness against the grey shadows of the pine forest.

A large kerchief of this, wound about his body, was the baby's only robe, but he seemed quite comfortable in it when Miss Betty found him, sleeping on a pillow of deep hair moss, his little brown fists closed as fast as his eyes, and a crimson toadstool grasped in one of them.

When Miss Betty screamed the baby awoke, and his long black lashes tickled his cheeks and made him wink and cry. But by the time she returned with her sister and the parson, he was quite happy again, gazing up with dark eyes full of delight into the glowing broom bush, and fighting the evening breeze with his feet, which were entangled in the folds of the yellow cloth, and with the battered toadstool which was still in his hand.

'And indeed, sir,' said Miss Betty, who had rubbed her nose till it looked like the twin toadstool to that which the baby was flourishing in her face, 'you won't suppose I would have left the poor little thing another moment, to catch its death of cold on a warm evening like this; but having no experience of such cases, and remembering that murder at

the inn in the Black Valley, and that the body was not allowed to be moved till the constables had seen it, I didn't feel to know how it might be with foundlings, and——'

But still Miss Betty did not touch the bairn. She was not accustomed to children. But the parson had christened too many babies to be afraid of them, and he picked up the little fellow in a moment, and tucked the yellow rag round him, and then addressing the little ladies precisely as if they were sponsors, he asked in his deep, round voice: 'Now where on the face of the earth are the vagabonds who have deserted this child?'

The little ladies did not know, the broom bushes were silent and the question has remained unanswered from that day to this.



## *The Baby, the Lawyer and the Parson*

THERE WERE no railways near Lingborough at this time. The coach ran three times a week, and a walking postman brought the letters from the town to the small hamlets. Telegraph wires were unknown, and yet news travelled quite as fast then as it does now, and in the course of the following morning all the neighbourhood knew that Miss Betty had found a baby under a broom bush, and the lawyer called in the afternoon to inquire how the ladies found themselves after the tea-party at Mrs General Dunmaw's.

Miss Kitty was glad on the whole. She felt nervous, but ready for a renewal of hostilities. Several clinching arguments had occurred to her in bed last night, and after hastily looking up a few lines from her commonplace book, which always made her cry when she read them, but which she hoped to be able to hurl at the lawyer with a steady voice, she followed Miss Betty to the drawing-room.

It was half a relief and half a disappointment to find that the lawyer was quite indifferent to the subject of their late contest. He overflowed with compliments; was quite sure he must have had the worst of the argument, and positively dying of curiosity to hear about the baby.

The little ladies were very full of the subject themselves. An active search for the baby's relations, conducted by the parson, the clerk, the farm bailiff, the constable, the cowherd and several supernumeraries, had so far proved quite vain. The country folk were most anxious to assist, especially by word of mouth. Except a small but sturdy number who had seen nothing, they had all seen 'tramps', but unluckily no two could be got together whose accounts of the tramps themselves, of the hour at which they were seen, or of the direction in which they went, would tally with each other.

The little ladies were quite alive to the possibility that the child's parents might never be traced, indeed the matter had been constantly before their minds ever since the parson had carried the baby to Lingborough, and laid it in the arms of Thomasina, the servant.

Miss Betty had sat long before her toilet-table that evening, gazing vacantly at the looking-glass. Not that the reflection of the eight curl-papers she had neatly twisted up was conveyed to her brain. She was in a brown study, during which the following thoughts passed through her mind, and they all pointed one way:

That that fine little fellow was not to blame for his people's misconduct.

That they would never be found.

That it would probably be the means of the poor child's ruin, body and soul, if they were.

That the master of the neighbouring workhouse bore a bad character.

That a child costs nothing to keep—where cows are kept too—for years.

That just at the age when a boy begins to eat dreadfully and wear out his clothes, he is very useful on a farm (though not for these reasons).

That Thomasina had taken to him.

That there need be no nonsense about it, as he could be brought up in his proper station in life in the kitchen and the farmyard.

That tramps have souls.

That he would be taught to say his prayers.

Miss Betty said hers, and went to bed; but all through that midsummer night the baby kept her awake, or flaunted his yellow robe and crimson toadstool through her dreams.

The morning brought no change in Miss Betty's views, but she felt doubtful as to how her sister would receive them. Would she regard them as foolish and unpractical, and her respect for Miss Betty's opinion be lessened thenceforward?

The fear was needless. Miss Kitty was romantic and imaginative. She had carried the baby through his boyhood about the Lingborough fields whilst she was dressing; and he was attending her own funeral in the capacity of an attached and faithful servant, in black livery with worsted frogs, as she sprinkled salt on her buttered toast at breakfast, when she was startled from this affecting daydream by Miss Betty's voice.

'Dear sister Kitty, I wish to consult you as to our plans in the event of those wicked people who deserted the baby not being found.'

The little ladies resolved that not an inkling of their benevolent scheme must be betrayed to the lawyer. But they dissembled awkwardly, and the tone in which they spoke of the tramp baby roused the lawyer's quick suspicions. He had a real respect for the little ladies, and was kindly anxious to save them from their own indiscretion.

'My dear ladies,' said he, 'I do hope your benevolence—may I say your romantic benevolence?—of disposition is not tempting you to adopt this gipsy waif?'

'I hope we know what is due to ourselves, and to the estate—small as it is—sir,' said Miss Betty, 'as well as to Providence, too well to attempt to raise any child, however handsome, from that station of life in which he was born.'

'Bless me, madam! I never dreamed you would adopt a beggar child as your heir; but I hope you mean to send it to the workhouse, if the gipsy tramps it belongs to are not to be found?'

'We have not made up our minds, sir, as to the course we propose to pursue,' said Miss Betty, with outward dignity proportioned to her inward doubts.

'My dear ladies,' said the lawyer anxiously, 'let me implore you not to be rash. To adopt a child in the most favourable circumstance is the greatest of risks. But if your benevolence *will* take that line, pray adopt some little boy out of one of your tenants' families. Even your teaching will not make him brilliant, as he is likely to inherit the minimum

of intellectual capacity; but he will learn his catechism, probably grow up respectable, and possibly grateful, since his forefathers have (so Miss Kitty assures me) had all these virtues for generations. But this baby is the child of a heathen, barbarous and wandering race. The propensities of the vagabonds who have deserted him are in every drop of his blood. All the parsons in the diocese won't make a Christian of him, and when (after anxieties I shudder to foresee) you flatter yourselves that he is civilized, he will run away and leave his shoes and stockings behind him.'

'He has a soul to be saved, if he is a gipsy,' said Miss Kitty hysterically.

'The soul, my dear Miss Kitty——' began the lawyer, facing round upon her.

'Don't say anything dreadful about the soul, sir, I beg,' said Miss Betty firmly. And then she added in a conciliatory tone: 'Won't you look at the little fellow, sir? I have no doubt his relations are shocking people; but when you see his innocent little face and his beautiful eyes, I think you'll say yourself that if he were a duke's son he couldn't be a finer child.'

'My experience of babies is so limited, Miss Betty,' said the lawyer, 'that really—if you'll excuse me—but I can quite imagine him. I have before now been tempted myself to adopt stray—puppies, when I have seen them in the round, soft, innocent, bright-eyed stage. And when they have grown up in the hands of more credulous friends into lanky, ill-conditioned, misconducted curs, I have congratulated myself that I was not misled by the graces of an age at which ill breeding is less apparent than later in life.'

The little ladies both rose. 'If you see no difference, sir,' said Miss Betty in her stateliest manner, 'between a babe with an immortal soul and the beasts that perish, it is quite useless to prolong the conversation.'

'Reason is apt to be useless when opposed to the generous impulses of a sex so full of sentiment as yours, madam,' said



the lawyer, rising also. 'Permit me to take a long farewell, since it is improbable that our friendship will resume its old position until your protégé has—run away.'

The words 'long farewell' and 'old friendship' were quite sufficient to soften wrath in the tender hearts of the little



ladies. But the lawyer had really lost his temper, and, before Miss Betty had decided how to offer the olive branch without conceding her principles, he was gone.

The weather was warm. The little ladies were heated by discussion and the parson by vain scouring of the country on foot, when they asked his advice upon their project, and related their conversation with the lawyer. The two gentlemen had so little in common that the parson felt it his duty not to let his advice be prejudiced by this fact. For some moments he sat silent, then he began to walk about as if he were composing a sermon; then he stopped before the little ladies (who were sitting as stiffly on the sofa as if it were a pew) and spoke as if he were delivering one.

'If you ask me, dear ladies, whether it is your duty to provide for this child because you found him, I say that there is no such obligation. If you ask if I think it wise in your own interests, and hopeful as to the boy's career, I am obliged to agree with your legal adviser. Vagabond ways are seldom cured in one generation, and I think it is quite probable that, after much trouble and anxiety spent upon him, he may go back to a wandering life. But, Miss Betty,' continued the parson in deepening tones, as he pounded his left palm with his right fist for want of a pulpit, 'if you ask me whether I believe any child of any race is born incapable of improvement, and beyond benefit from the charities we owe to each other, I should deny my faith if I could say yes. I shall not, madam, confuse the end of your connection with him with the end of your training in him, even if he runs away, or fancy that I see the one because I see the other. I do not pretend to know how much evil he inherits from his forefathers as accurately as our graphic friend; but I do know that he has a Father whose image is also to be found in His children—not quite effaced in any of them—and whose care of this one will last when yours, madam, may seem to have been in vain.'

As the little ladies rushed forward and each shook a hand of the parson, he felt some compunction for his speech.

'I fear I am encouraging you in grave indiscretion,' said he. 'But indeed, my dear ladies, I am quite against your project, for you do not realize the anxieties and disappointments that are before you, I am sure. The child will give you infinite trouble. I think he will run away. And yet I cannot in good conscience say that I believe love's labour must be lost. He may return to the woods and wilds; but I hope he will carry something with him.'

'Did the reverend gentleman mean Miss Betty's teaspoons?' asked the lawyer, stroking his long chin, when he was told what the parson had said.

*Babyhood—Pretty Flowers—The Rose-coloured Tulips*

THE MATTER of the baby's cap disturbed the little ladies. It seemed so like the beginning of a fulfilment of the lawyer's croakings.

Miss Kitty had made it. She had never seen a baby without a cap before, and the sight was unusual, if not indecent. But Miss Kitty was a quick needlewoman, and when the new cap was fairly tied over the thick crop of silky black hair, the baby looked so much less like Puck, and so much more like the rest of the baby world, that it was quite a relief.



Miss Kitty's feelings may therefore be imagined when, going to the baby just after the parson's departure, she found him in open rebellion against his cap. It had been tied on whilst he was asleep, and his eyes were no sooner open than he commenced the attack. He pulled with one little brown hand and tugged with the other; he dragged a rosette over his nose and got the frills into his eyes; he worried it as a puppy worries your handkerchief if you tie it round its face and tell it to 'look like a grandmother'. At last the strings gave way, and he cast it triumphantly out of the clothes-basket which served him for cradle.

Successive efforts to induce him to wear it proved vain, so Thomasina said the weather was warm, and his hair was very thick, and she parted this and brushed it, and Miss Kitty gave the cap to the farm bailiff's baby, who took to it as kindly as a dumpling to a pudding-cloth.

How the boy was ever kept inside his christening clothes, Thomasina said she did not know. But when he got into the parson's arms he lay quite quiet, which was a good omen.

That he might lack no advantage, Miss Betty stood god-mother for him, and the parish clerk and the sexton were his godfathers.

He was named John.

'A plain, sensible name,' said Miss Betty. 'And while we are about it,' she added, 'we may as well choose his surname. For a surname he must have, and the sooner it is decided upon the better.'

Miss Kitty had made a list of twenty-seven of her favourite Christian names, which Miss Betty had sternly rejected, that everything might be plain, practical and respectable at the outset of the tramp child's career. For the same reason she refused to adopt Miss Kitty's suggestions for a surname.

'It's so seldom there's a chance of *choosing* a surname for anybody, sister,' said Miss Kitty, 'it seems a pity not to choose a pretty one.'

'Sister Kitty,' said Miss Betty, 'don't be romantic. The boy is to be brought up in that station of life for which one syllable is ample. I should have called him Smith if that had not been Thomasina's name. As it is, I propose to call him Broom. He was found under a bush of broom, and it goes very well with John, and sounds plain and respectable.'

So Miss Betty bought a Bible, and on the fly-leaf of it she wrote in her fine, round, gentlewoman's writing: '*John Broom. With good wishes for his welfare, temporal and eternal. From a sincere friend.*' And when the inscription was dry the Bible was wrapped in brown paper, and put by in Thomasina's trunk till John Broom should come to years of discretion.

He was slow to reach them, though in other respects he grew fast.

When he began to walk he would walk barefoot. To be out of doors was his delight, but on the threshold of the house he always sat down and discarded his shoes and stockings. Thomasina bastinadoed the soles of his feet with the soles of his shoes 'to teach him the use of them', so she

said. But Miss Kitty sighed, and thought of the lawyer's prediction.

There was no blinking the fact that the child was as troublesome as he was pretty. The very demon of mischief danced in his black eyes, and seemed to possess his feet and fingers as if with quicksilver. And if, as Thomasina said, you 'never knew what he would be at next', you might also be pretty sure that it would be something he ought to have left undone.

John Broom early developed a taste for glass and crockery, and as the china cupboard was in that part of the house to which he by social standing also belonged, he had many chances to seize upon cups, jugs and dishes. If detected with anything that he ought not to have had, it was his custom to drop the forbidden toy and toddle off as fast as his unpractised feet would carry him. The havoc which this caused amongst the glass and china was bewildering in a household where tea sets and dinner sets had passed from generation to generation, where slapdash, giddy-pated kitchenmaids never came, where Miss Betty washed the best teacups in the parlour, where Thomasina was more careful than her mistress, and the breaking of a single plate was a serious matter, and, if beyond riveting, a misfortune.

Thomasina soon found that her charge was safest, as he was happiest, out of doors. A very successful device was to shut him up in the drying-ground, and tell him to 'pick the pretty flowers'. John Broom preferred flowers even to china cups with gilding on them. He gathered nosegays of daisies and buttercups, and the winning way in which he would present these to the little ladies atoned, in their benevolent eyes, for many a smashed teacup.

But the tramp baby's restless spirit was soon weary of the drying-ground, and he set forth one morning in search of 'fresh woods and pastures new'. He then seated himself on the threshold to take off his shoes, when he heard the sound of Thomasina's footsteps, and, hastily staggering to his



feet, toddled forth without further delay. The sky was blue above him, the sun was shining and the air was very sweet. He ran for a bit and then tumbled, and picked himself up again, and got a fresh impetus, and so on till he reached the door of the kitchen garden, which was open. It was an old-fashioned kitchen garden with flowers in the borders. There were single rose-coloured tulips which had been in

the garden as long as Miss Betty could remember, and they had been so increased by dividing the clumps that they now stretched in two rich lines of colour down both sides of the long walk. And John Broom saw them.

'Pick the pretty f'owers, love,' said he, in imitation of Thomasina's patronizing tone, and forthwith, beginning at the end, he went steadily to the top of the right-hand border, mowing the rose-coloured tulips as he went.

Meanwhile when Thomasina came to look for him he could not be found, and when all the back premises and the drying-ground had been searched in vain, she gave the alarm to the little ladies.

Miss Kitty's vivid imagination leaped at once to the conclusion that the child's vagabond relations had fetched him away, and she became rigid with alarm. But Miss Betty rushed out into the shrubbery, and Miss Kitty took a whiff of her vinaigrette and followed her.

When they came at last to the kitchen garden, Miss Betty's grief for the loss of John Broom did not prevent her observing that there was something odd about the borders, and when she got to the top, and found that all the tulips had been picked from one side, she sank down on the roller which happened to be lying beside her.

And John Broom staggered up to her and, crying, 'For 'oo, Miss Betty', fell headlong with a sheaf of rose-coloured tulips into her lap.

As he did not offer any to Miss Kitty, her better judgment was not warped, and she said: 'You must slap him, sister Betty.'

'Put out your hand, John Broom,' said Miss Betty, much agitated.

And John Broom, who was quite composed, put out both his little grubby paws so trustfully that Miss Betty had not the heart to strike him. But she scolded him, 'Naughty boy!' and she pointed to the tulips and shook her head. John Broom looked thoughtfully at them, and shook his.

'Naughty boy!' repeated Miss Betty, and she added in very impressive tones: 'John Broom's a very naughty boy!'

After which she took him to Thomasina, and Miss Kitty collected the rose-coloured tulips and put them into water in the best old china punch-bowl.



In the course of the afternoon she peeped into the kitchen, where John Broom sat on the floor, under the window, gazing thoughtfully up into the sky.

'As good as gold, bless his little heart!' murmured Miss Kitty. For, as his feet were tucked under him, she did not know that he had just put his shoes and stockings into the pig-tub, into which he all but fell himself from the exertion. He did not hear Miss Kitty, and thought on. He wanted to be out again, and he had a tantalizing remembrance of the ease with which the tender juicy stalks of the tulips went snap, snap, in that new place of amusement he had discovered. Thomasina looked into the kitchen and went away again. When she had gone John Broom went away also.

He went both faster and steadier on his bare feet. And when he got into the kitchen garden, it recalled Miss Betty



to his mind. And he shook his head, and said, 'Naughty boy!' And then he went up the left-hand border, mowing the tulips as he went; after which he trotted home, and met Thomasina at the back door. And he hugged the sheaf of rose-coloured tulips in his arms, and said: 'John Broom a very naughty boy!'

Thomasina was not sentimental, and she slapped him well—his hands for picking the tulips, and his feet for going barefoot.

But his feet had to be slapped with Thomasina's slipper, for his own shoes could not be found.

## *Education—Fireside Tales*

**I**N SPITE of all his pranks, John Broom did not lose the favour of his friends. Thomasina spoiled him, and Miss Betty and Miss Kitty tried not to do so.

The parson had said: 'Treat the child fairly. Bring him up as he will have to live hereafter. Don't make him half pet and half servant.' And following this advice, and her own resolve that there should be 'no nonsense' in the matter, Miss Betty had made it a rule that he should not be admitted to the parlour. It bore more heavily on the tender hearts of the little ladies than on the light heart of John Broom, and led to their waylaying him in the passages and gardens with little gifts, unknown to each other. And when Miss Kitty kissed his newly washed cheeks, and pronounced them 'like ripe russets', Miss Betty murmured, 'Be judicious, sister Kitty'; and Miss Kitty would correct any possible ill effects by saying, '*Now* make your bow to your betters, John Broom, and say, "Thank you, ma'am!"' which was accomplished by the child's giving a tug to the forelock of his thick black hair, with a world of mischief in his eyes.

When he was old enough, the little ladies sent him to the village school.

The total failure of their hopes for his education was not the smallest of the disappointments Miss Betty and Miss Kitty endured on his behalf. The quarrel with the lawyer had been made up long ago, and though there was always a touch of raillery in his inquiries after 'the young gipsy', he had once said: 'If he turns out anything of a genius at school, I might find a place for him in the office, by and by.' The lawyer was kind-hearted in his own fashion, and on this hint Miss Kitty built up hopes, which unhappily were met by no responsive ambition in John Broom.

As to his fitness to be an errand boy, he could not carry a message from the kitchen to the cowhouse without stopping by the way to play with the yard dog, and a hedgehog in the path would probably have led him astray, if Thomasina had had a fit and he had been dispatched for the doctor.

During school hours he spent most of his time under the fool's-cap when he was not playing truant. With his school-mates he was good friends. If he was seldom out of mischief, he was seldom out of temper. He could beat any boy at a foot race (without shoes); he knew the notes and nests of every bird that sang, and whatever an old pocket-knife is capable of, that John Broom could and would do with it for his fellows.

Miss Betty had herself tried to teach him to read, and she continued to be responsible for his religious instruction. She had hoped to stir up his industry by showing him the Bible, and promising that when he could read it he should have it for his 'very own'. But he either could not or would not apply himself, so the prize lay unearned in Thomasina's trunk. But he would listen for any length of time to Scripture stories, if they were read or told to him, especially to the history of Elisha and the adventures of the Judges.

Indeed, since he could no longer be shut up in the drying-ground, Thomasina had found that he was never so happy and so safe as when he was listening to tales, and many a long winter evening he lay idle on the kitchen hearth, with his head on the sheep-dog, whilst the more industrious Thomasina plied her knitting-needles, as she sat in the ingle-nook, with the flickering firelight playing among the plaits of her large cap, and told tales of the countryside.

Not that John Broom was her only hearer. Annie 'the lass' sat by the hearth also, and Thomasina took care that she did not 'sit with her hands before her'. And a little farther away sat the cowherd. He had a sleeping-room above the barn, and took his meals in the house. By Miss Betty's desire he always went in to family prayers after supper, when

he sat as close as possible to the door, under an uncomfortable consciousness that Thomasina did not think his boots clean enough for the occasion, and would find something to pick off the carpet as she followed him out, however hardly he might have used the door-scraper beforehand.

It might be a difficult matter to decide which he liked best, beer or John Broom. But next to these he liked Thomasina's stories.

Thomasina was kind to him. With all his failings and the dirt on his boots, she liked him better than the farm bailiff. The farm bailiff was thrifty and sensible and faithful, and Thomasina was faithful and sensible and thrifty, and they each had a tendency to claim the monopoly of those virtues. Notable people complain, very properly, of thriftless and untidy ones, but they sometimes agree better with them than with rival notabilities. And so Thomasina's broad face beamed benevolently as she bid the cowherd 'draw up' to the fire, and he, who (like Thomasina) was a native of the country, would confirm the marvels she related, with a proper pride in the wonderful district to which they both belonged.

He would help her out sometimes with names and dates in a local biography. By his own account he knew the man who was murdered at the inn in the Black Valley so intimately that it turned Annie the lass as white as a dish-cloth to sit beside him. If Thomasina said that folk were yet alive who had seen the little green men dance in Dawborough Croft, the cowherd would smack his knees and cry, 'Scores on 'em!' And when she whispered of the white figure which stood at the crossroads after midnight, he testified to having seen it himself—tall beyond mortal height, and pointing four ways at once. He had a legend of his own too, which Thomasina sometimes gave him the chance of telling, of how he was followed home one moonlight night by a black Something as big as a young calf, which 'wimmled and wammled' around him till he fell senseless into the ditch,

and, being found there by the farm bailiff on his return from market, was unjustly accused of the vice of intoxication.

'Fault-finders should be free of flaws,' Thomasina would say with a prim chin. She *had* seen the farm bailiff himself 'the worse' for more than his supper beer.

But there was one history which Thomasina was always loath to relate, and it was that which both John Broom and the cowherd especially preferred—the history of Lob Lie-by-the-fire.

Thomasina had a feeling (which was shared by Annie the lass) that it was better not to talk of 'anything' peculiar to the house in which you were living. One's neighbours' ghosts and bogles are another matter.

But to John Broom and the cowherd no subject was so interesting as that of the Lubber-fiend. The cowherd sighed to think of the good old times when a man might sleep on in spite of cocks, and the stables be cleaner, and the beasts better tended than if he had been up with the lark. And John Broom's curiosity was never quenched about the rough, hairy Good-fellow who worked at night that others might be idle by day, and who was sometimes caught at his hard-earned nap, lying, 'like a great hurgin bear', where the boy loved to lie himself, before the fire, on this very hearth.

Why and where he had gone, Thomasina could not tell. She had heard that he had originally come from some other household, where he had been offended. But whether he had gone elsewhere when he forsook Lingborough, or whether 'such things had left the country' for good, she did not pretend to say.

And when she had told, for the third or fourth time, how his porridge was put into a corner of the cowhouse for him overnight, and how he had been often overheard at his work, but rarely seen, and then only lying before the fire, Miss Betty would ring for prayers, and Thomasina would fold up her knitting and lead the way, followed by Annie the lass, whose nerves John Broom would startle by treading

on her heels, the rear being brought up by the cowherd, looking hopelessly at his boots.

Miss Betty and Miss Kitty did really deny themselves the indulgence of being indulgent, and treated John Broom on principles, and for his good. But they did so in their own tremulous and spasmodic way, and got little credit for it. Thomasina, on the other hand, spoiled him with such a masterful managing air, and so much sensible talk, that no one would have thought that the only system she followed was to conceal his misdemeanours, and to stand between him and the just wrath of the farm bailiff.

The farm bailiff, or grieve, as he liked to call himself, was a Scotchman, with a hard-featured face (which he washed on the Sabbath), a harsh voice, a good heart rather deeper down in his body than is usual, and a shrewd, money-getting head, with a speckled straw hat on the top of it. No one could venture to imagine when that hat was new, or how long ago it was that the farm bailiff went to the expense of purchasing those workday clothes. But the dirt on his face and neck was an orderly accumulation, such as gathers on walls, oil-paintings and other places to which soap is not habitually applied; it was not a matter of spills and splashes, like the dirt John Broom disgraced himself with. And his clothes, if old, fitted neatly about him; they never suggested raggedness, which was the normal condition of the tramp boy's jackets. They only looked as if he had been born (and occasionally buried) in them. It is needful to make this distinction, that the good man may not be accused of inconsistency in the peculiar vexation which John Broom's disorderly appearance caused him.

In truth, Miss Betty's protégé had reached the age at which he was to 'eat dreadfully, wear out his clothes and be useful on the farm'; and the last condition was quite unfulfilled. At eleven years old he could not be trusted to scare birds, and at half that age the farm bailiff's eldest child could drive cattle.

'And no' just ruin the leddies in new coats and compliments, either, like some ne'er-do-weels,' added the farm bailiff, who had heard with a jealous ear of sixpences given by Miss Betty and Miss Kitty to their wasteful favourite.



When the eleventh anniversary of John Broom's discovery was passed, and his character at school gave no hopes of his ever qualifying himself to serve the lawyer, it was resolved that, 'idleness being the mother of mischief', he should be put under the care of the farm bailiff, to do such odd jobs about the place as might be suited to his capacity and love of outdoor life. And now John Broom's troubles began. By fair means or foul, with here an hour's weeding and there a day's bird scaring, and with errands perpetual, the farm

bailiff contrived to 'get some work out of' the idle little urchin. His speckled hat and grim face seemed to be everywhere, and always to pop up when John Broom began to play.

They lived 'at daggers drawn'. I am sorry to say that John Broom's fitful industry was still kept for his own fancies. To climb trees, to run races with the sheep-dog, to cut grotesque sticks, gather hedge fruits, explore a bog, or make new friends among beasts and birds—at such matters he would labour with feverish zeal. But so far from trying to cure himself of his indolence about daily drudgery, he found a new and pleasant excitement in thwarting the farm bailiff at every turn.

It would not sound dignified to say that the farm bailiff took pleasure in thwarting John Broom. But he certainly did not show his satisfaction when the boy did do his work properly. Perhaps he thought that praise is not good for young people; and the child did not often give him the chance of trying. Of blame he was free enough. Not a good scolding to clear the air, such as Thomasina would give to Annie the lass, but his slow, caustic tongue was always growling, like muttered thunder, over John Broom's incorrigible head.

He had never approved of the tramp child, who had the overwhelming drawbacks of having no pedigree and of being a bad bargain as to expense. This was not altogether John Broom's fault, but with his personal failings the farm bailiff had even less sympathy. It has been hinted that he was born in the speckled hat, and whether this were so or not, he certainly had worn an old head whilst his shoulders were still young, and could not remember the time when he wished to waste his energies on anything that did not earn or at least save something.

Once only did anything like approval of the lad escape his lips.

Miss Betty's uncle's second cousin had returned from



foreign lands with a good fortune and several white cockatoos. He kept the fortune himself, but he gave the cockatoos to his friends, and he sent one of them to the little ladies of Lingborough.

He was a lovely creature (the cockatoo, not the cousin, who was plain), and John Broom's admiration of him was boundless. He gazed at the sulphur-coloured crest, the pure white wings with their deeper-tinted lining, and even the beak and the fierce round eyes, as he had gazed at the broom bush in his babyhood, with insatiable delight.

The cousin did things handsomely. He had had a ring put round one of the cockatoo's ankles, with a bright steel chain attached and a fastener to secure it to the perch. The cockatoo was sent in the cage by coach, and a perch, made of foreign wood, followed by the carrier.

Miss Betty and Miss Kitty were delighted both with the cockatoo and the perch, but they were a good deal troubled as to how to fasten the two together. There was a neat little ring on the perch, and the cockatoo's chain was quite complete, and he evidently wanted to get out, for he shook the walls of his cage in his gambols. But he put up his crest and snapped when anyone approached, in a manner so alarming that Annie the lass shut herself up in the dairy, and the farm bailiff turned his speckled hat in his hands, and gave cautious counsel from a safe distance.

'How he flaps!' cried Miss Betty. 'I'm afraid he has a very vicious temper.'

'He only wants to get out, Miss Betty,' said John Broom. 'He'd be all right with his perch, and I think I can get him on it.'

'Now Heaven save us from the sin o' presumption!' cried the farm bailiff, and putting on the speckled hat, he added, slowly: 'I'm thinking, John Broom, that if ye're engaged wi' the leddies this morning it'll be time I turned my hand to singling these few turnips ye've been thinking about the week past.'

On which he departed, and John Broom pressed the little ladies to leave him alone with the bird.

'We shouldn't like to leave you alone with a wild creature like that,' said Miss Betty.

'He's just frightened on ye, Miss Betty. He'll be like a lamb when you're gone,' urged John Broom.

'Besides, we should like to see you do it,' said Miss Kitty.

'You can look in through the window, miss. I must fasten the door, or he'll be out.'

'I should never forgive myself if he hurt you, John,' said Miss Betty irresolutely, for she was very anxious to have the cockatoo and perch in full glory in the parlour.

'He'll none hurt me, miss,' said John, with a cheerful smile on his rosy face. 'I likes him, and he'll like me.'

This settled the matter. John was left with the cockatoo. He locked the door, and the little ladies went into the garden and peeped through the window.

They saw John Broom approach the cage, on which the cockatoo put up his crest, opened his beak slowly, and snarled, and Miss Betty tapped on the window and shook her black satin workbag.

'Don't go near him!' she cried.

But John Broom paid no attention. 'What are you putting up that topknot of yours at me for?' said he to the cockatoo. 'Don't ye know your own friends? I'm going to let ye out, I am. You're going on to your perch, you are.'

'Eh, but you're a bonny creature!' he added, as the cockatoo filled the cage with snow and sulphur flutterings.

'Keep away, keep away!' screamed the little ladies, playing a duet on the window panes.

'Out with you!' said John Broom, as he unfastened the cage door.

And just when Miss Betty had run round, and as she shouted through the keyhole, 'Open the door, John Broom. We've changed our minds. We've decided to keep it in its cage', the cockatoo strode solemnly forth on his eight long toes.

'Pretty Cocky!' said he.

When Miss Betty got back to the window, John Broom had just made an injudicious grab at the steel chain, on which Pretty Cocky flew fiercely at him, and John, burying his face in his arms, received the attack on his thick poll,



laughing into his sleeves and holding fast to the chain, whilst the cockatoo and the little ladies screamed against each other.

'It'll break your leg—you'll tear its eyes out!' cried Miss Kitty.

'Miss Kitty means that you'll break its leg, and it will tear your eyes out,' Miss Betty explained through the glass. 'John Broom! Come away! Lock it in! Let it go!'

But Cocky was now waddling solemnly round the room,

and John Broom was creeping after him, with the end of the chain in one hand and the perch in the other, and in a moment more he had joined the chain and the ring, and just as Miss Betty was about to send for the constable and have the door broken open, Cocky—driven into a corner—clutched his perch and was raised triumphantly to his place in the bow-window.

He was now a parlour pet, and John Broom saw little of him. This vexed him, for he had taken a passionate liking for the bird. The little ladies rewarded him well for his skill, but this brought him no favour from the farm bailiff, and matters went on as ill as before.

One day the cockatoo got his chain entangled, and Miss Kitty promptly advanced to put it right. She had unfastened that end which secured it to the perch, when Cocky, who had been watching the proceeding with much interest, dabbed at her with his beak. Miss Kitty fled, but with great presence of mind shut the door after her. She forgot, however, that the window was open, in front of which stood the cockatoo scanning the summer sky with his fierce eyes, and flapping himself in the breeze.

And just as the little ladies ran into the garden, and Miss Kitty was saying, 'One comfort is, sister Betty, that it's quite safe in the room, till we can think what to do next', he bowed his yellow crest, spread his noble wings and sailed out into the ether.

In ten minutes the whole able-bodied population of the place was in the grounds of Lingborough, including the farm bailiff.

The cockatoo was on the top of a fir tree, and a fragment of the chain was with him, for he had broken it, and below on the lawn stood the little ladies, who, with the unfailing courage of women in a hopeless cause, were trying to dislodge him by waving their pocket-handkerchiefs and crying 'Sh!'

He looked composedly down out of one eye for some time, and then he began to move.

'I think it's coming down now,' said Miss Kitty.

But in a quarter of a minute Cocky had sailed a quarter of a mile, and was rocking himself on the top of an old willow tree. And at this moment John Broom joined the crowd which followed him.

'I'm thinking he's got his chain fast,' said the farm bailiff; 'if onybody that understood the beastie daured to get near him——'

'I'll get him!' said John Broom, casting down his hat.

'Ye'll get your neck thraved!' said the farm bailiff.

'We won't hear of it!' said the little ladies.

But to their horror John Broom kicked off his shoes, after which he spat upon his hands (a shock which Miss Kitty thought she never could have survived) and away he went up the willow.

It was not an easy tree to climb, and he had one or two narrow escapes, which kept the crowd breathless, but he shook the hair from his eyes, moistened his hands afresh, and went on. The farm bailiff's far-away heart was stirred. No Scotchman is insensible to gallantry. And courage is the only thing a 'canny' Scot can bear to see expended without return.

'John Broom,' screamed Miss Betty, 'come down! I order, I command you to come down!'

The farm bailiff drew his speckled hat forward to shade his upward gaze, and folded his arms.

'Dinna call on him, leddies,' he said, speaking more quickly than usual. 'Dinna mak him turn his head. Steady, lad! Grip wi' your feet. Spit on your pawms, man.'

Once the boy trod on a rotten branch, and as he drew back his foot, and it came crashing down, the farm bailiff set his teeth, and Miss Kitty fainted in Thomasina's arms.

'I'll reward anyone who'll fetch him down,' sobbed Miss Betty. But John Broom seated himself on the same branch as the cockatoo, and undid the chain and prepared his hands for the downward journey.

'You've got a rare perch this time,' said he. And Pretty Cocky crept towards him, and rubbed its head against him and chuckled with joy.

What dreams of liberty in the tree tops, with John Broom for a playfellow, passed through his crested head, who shall say? But when he found that his friend meant to take him prisoner, he became very angry and much alarmed. And when John Broom grasped him by both legs and began to descend, Cocky pecked him vigorously. But the boy held the back of his head towards him, and went steadily down.

'Weel done!' roared the farm bailiff. 'Gently, lad! Gude save us! ha'e a care o' yoursen. That's weel. Keep your pow at him. Dinna let the beast get to your een.'

But when John Broom was so near the ground as to be safe, the farm bailiff turned wrathfully upon his son, who had been gazing open-mouthed at the sight which had so interested his father.

'Ye look weel standing gawping here, before the leddies,' said he, 'wasting the precious hours, and bringing your father's grey hairs wi' sorrow to the grave; and John Broom yonder shaming ye, and you not so much as thinking to fetch the perch for him, ye lazy loon. Away wi' ye and get it, before I lay a stick about your shoulders.'

And when his son had gone for the perch, and John Broom was safely on the ground, laughing, bleeding and triumphant, the farm bailiff said:

'Ye're a bauld chiel, John Broom, I'll say that for ye.'

## *Into the Mist*

UNFORTUNATELY the favourable impression produced by 'the gipsy lad's' daring soon passed from the farm bailiff's mind. It was partly effaced by the old jealousy of the little ladies' favour. Miss Betty gave the boy no less than four silver shillings, and he ungraciously refused to let the farm bailiff place them in a savings bank for him.

Matters got from bad to worse. The farming man was not the only one who was jealous, and John Broom himself was as idle and restless as ever. Though, if he had listened respectfully to the Scotchman's counsels, or shown any disposition to look up to and be guided by him, much might have been overlooked. But he made fun of him and made a friend of the cowherd. And this latter most manifest token of low breeding vexed the respectable taste of the farm bailiff.

John Broom had his own grievances too, and he brooded over them. He thought the little ladies had given him over to the farm bailiff because they had ceased to care for him, and that the farm bailiff was prejudiced against him beyond any hope of propitiation. The village folk taunted him, too, with being an outcast, and called him Gipsy John, and this maddened him. Then he would creep into the cowhouse and lie in the straw against the white cow's warm back, and for a few of Miss Betty's coppers, to spend in beer or tobacco, the cowherd would hide him from the farm bailiff and tell him countryside tales. To Thomasina's stories of ghosts and gossip, he would add strange tales of smugglers on the near-lying coast, and as John Broom listened his restless blood rebelled more and more against the sour sneers and dry drudgery that he got from the farm bailiff.

Nor were sneers the sharpest punishment his misdemeanours earned. The farm bailiff's stick was thick, and his arm was strong, and he had a tendency to believe that if a flogging was good for a boy, the more he had of it the better it would be for him.



And John Broom, who never let a cry escape him at the time, would steal away afterwards and sob out his grief into the long soft coat of the sympathizing sheep-dog.

Unfortunately he never tried the effect of deserving better treatment as a remedy for his woes. The parson's good advice and Miss Betty's entreaties were alike in vain. He was ungrateful even to Thomasina. The little ladies sighed and thought of the lawyer. And the parson preached patience.

'Cocky has been tamed,' said Miss Kitty thoughtfully; 'perhaps John Broom will get steadier by and by.'

'It seems a pity we can't chain him to a perch, Miss Kitty,' laughed the parson; 'he would be safe then at any rate.'

Miss Betty said afterwards that it did seem so remarkable



that the parson should have made this particular joke on this particular night—the night when John Broom did not come home.

He had played truant all day. The farm bailiff had wanted him, and he had kept out of the way.

The wind was from the east, and a white mist rolled in from the sea, bringing a strange invigorating smell, and making your lips clammy with salt. It made John Broom's heart beat faster, and filled his head with dreams of ships and smugglers, and rocking masts higher than the willow tree, and winds wilder than this wind, and dancing waves.

Then something loomed through the fog. It was the farm bailiff's speckled hat. John Broom hesitated—the thick stick became visible.

Then a cloud rolled between them, and the child turned and ran and ran and ran coastwards, into the sea mist.

*The Sea—The One-eyed Sailor—The Other Side  
of the World*

**J**OHAN BROOM was footsore when he reached the coast, but that keen, life-giving smell had drawn him on and held him up. The fog had cleared off, and he strained his black eyes through the darkness to see the sea.



He had never seen it—that other world within this, on which one lived out of doors, and climbed about all day, and no one blamed him.

When he did see it, he thought he had got to the end of the world. If the edge of the cliff were not the end, he could not make out where the sky began; and if that darkness were the sea, the sea was full of stars.

But this was because the sea was quiet and reflected the colour of the night sky, and the stars were the lights of the herring-boats twinkling in the bay.

When he got down by the water he saw the vessels lying alongside, and they were dirtier than he had supposed. But he did not lose heart, and remembering, from the cowherd's tales, that people who cannot pay for their passage must

either work it out or hide themselves on board ship, he took the easier alternative, and got on to the first vessel which had a plank to the quay, and hid himself under some tarpaulin on the deck.

The vessel was a collier bound for London, and she sailed with the morning tide.

When he was found out he was not ill-treated. Indeed the rough skipper offered to take him home again on his return voyage. He would have liked to go, but pride withheld him, and homesickness had not yet eaten into his very soul. Then an old sailor with one eye (but that a sly one) met him, and told him tales more wonderful than the cowherd's. And with him he shipped as cabin-boy, on a vessel bound for the other side of the world.

A great many sins bring their own punishment in this life pretty clearly, and sometimes pretty closely; but few more directly or more bitterly than rebellion against the duties, and ingratitude for the blessings, of home.

There was no playing truant on board ship; and as to the master poor John Broom served now, his cruelty made the memory of the farm bailiif a memory of tenderness and gentleness and indulgence. Till he was half naked and half starved, and had only short snatches of sleep in hard corners, it had never struck him that when one has got good food and clothes, and sound sleep in a kindly home, he has got more than many people, and enough to be thankful for.

He did everything he was told now as fast as he could do it, in fear for his life. The one-eyed sailor had told him that the captain always took orphans and poor friendless lads to be his cabin-boys, and John Broom thought what a nice kind man he must be, and how different from the farm bailiif, who thought nobody could be trustworthy unless he could show parents and grandparents and cousins to the sixth

degree. But after they had sailed, when John Broom felt very ill, and asked the one-eyed sailor where he was to sleep, the one-eyed sailor pleasantly replied that if he hadn't brought a four-post bed in his pocket he must sleep where he could, for that all the other cabin-boys were sleeping in Davy's Locker, and couldn't be disturbed. And it was not till John Broom had learned ship's language that he found out that Davy's Locker meant the deep, and that the other cabin-boys were dead. 'And as they'd nobody belonging to 'em, no hearts was broke,' added the sailor, winking with his one eye.

John Broom slept standing sometimes for weariness, but he did not sleep in Davy's Locker. Young as he was he had dauntless courage, a careless hopeful heart, and a tough little body; and that strong, life-giving sea smell bore him up instead of food, and he got to the other side of the world.

Why he did not stay there, why he did not run away into the wilderness to find at least some easier death than to have his bones broken by the cruel captain, he often wondered afterwards. He was so much quicker and braver than the boys they commonly got, that the old sailor kept a sharp watch over him with his one eye whilst they were ashore; but one day he was too drunk to see out of it, and John Broom ran away.

It was Christmas Day, and so hot that he could not run far, for he was at the other side of the world, where things are upside-down, and he sat down by the roadside on the outskirts of the city; and as he sat, with his thin, brown face resting on his hands, a familiar voice beside him said, 'Pretty Cocky!' and looking up he saw a man with several cages of birds. The speaker was a cockatoo of the most exquisite shades of cream-colour, salmon and rose, and he had a rose-coloured crest. But lovely as he was, John Broom's eyes were on another cage, where, silent, solemn and sulky, sat a big white one with sulphur-coloured trimmings and fierce black eyes; and he was so like Miss Betty's pet that

the poor child's heart bounded as if a hand had been held out to him from home.

'If you let him get at you, you'll not do it a second time, mate,' said the man. 'He's the nastiest tempered beast I ever saw. I'd have wrung his neck long ago if he hadn't such a fine coat.'



But John Broom said, as he had said before: 'I like him, and he'll like me.'

When the cockatoo bit his finger to the bone, the man roared with laughter, but John Broom did not draw his hand away. He kept it still at the bird's beak, and with the other he gently scratched him under the crest and wings. And when the white cockatoo began to stretch out his eight long toes, as cats clutch with their claws from pleasure, and chuckled and sighed and bit softly without hurting, and laid his head against the bars till his snow and sulphur

feathers touched John Broom's black locks, the man was amazed.

'Look here, mate,' said he, 'you've the trick with birds, and no mistake. I'll sell you this one cheap, and you'll be able to sell him dear.'

'I've not a penny in the world,' said John Broom.

'You do look cleaned out too,' said the man, scanning him from head to foot. 'I tell you what, you shall come with me a bit and tame the birds, and I'll find you something to eat.'

Ten minutes before John Broom would have jumped at this offer, but now he refused it. The sight of the cockatoo had brought back the fever of homesickness in all its fierceness. He couldn't stay out here. He would dare anything, do anything, to see the hills about Lingborough once more before he died; and even if he did not live to see them, he might live to sleep in that part of Davy's Locker which should rock him on the shores of home.

The man gave him a shilling for fastening a ring and chain on to the Cocky's ankle, and with this he got the best dinner he had eaten since he lost sight of the farm bailiff's speckled hat in the mist.

And then he went back to the one-eyed sailor, and shipped as cabin-boy again for the homeward voyage.

*The Highlander—Barrack Life—The Great Curse—  
John Broom's Money-box*

WHEN John Broom did get home he did not go to sea again. He lived from hand to mouth in the seaport town, and slept, as he was well accustomed to sleep, in holes and corners.

Every day and every night, through the long months of the voyage, he had dreamed of begging his way barefoot to Miss Betty's door. But now he did not go. His life was hard, but it was not cruel. He was very idle, and there was plenty to see. He wandered about the country as of old. The ships and shipping too had a fascination for him now that the past was past, and here he could watch them from the shore; and, partly for shame and partly for pride, he could not face the idea of going back. If he had been taunted with being a vagrant boy before, what would be said now if he presented himself, a true tramp, to the farm bailiff? Besides, Miss Betty and Miss Kitty could not forgive him. It was impossible!

He was wandering about one day when he came to some fine high walls with buildings inside. There was an open gateway, at which stood a soldier with a musket. But a woman and some children went in, and he did not shoot them; so when his back was turned, and he was walking stiffly to where he came from, John Broom ran in through the gateway.

The first man he saw was the grandest looking man he had ever seen. Indeed he looked more like a bird than a man—a big bird with a big black crest. He was very tall. His feet were broad and white, like the feathered feet of some plummy bird, his legs were bare and brown and hairy. He was clothed in many colours. He had fur in front, which swung

as he walked, and silver and shining stones about him. He held his head very high, and from it dropped great black plumes. His face looked as if it had been cut—roughly but artistically—out of a block of old wood, and his eyes were the colour of a summer sky. And John Broom felt as he had felt when he first saw Miss Betty's cockatoo.

In repose the Highlander's eye was as clear as a cairngorm and as cold, but when it fell upon John Broom it took a twinkle not quite unlike the twinkle in the one eye of the sailor; and then, to his amazement, this grand creature beckoned to John Broom with a rather dirty hand.

'Yes, sir,' said John Broom, staring up at the splendid giant, with eyes of wonder.

'I'm saying,' said the Highlander confidentially (and it had a pleasant homely sound to hear him speak like the farm bailiff), 'I'm saying, I'm confined to barracks, ye ken; and I'll gie' ye a hawpenny if ye'll get the bottle filled wi' whusky. Roun' yon corner ye'll see the Britain's Defenders.'

But at this moment he erected himself, his turquoise eyes looked straight before them, and he put his hand to his head and moved it slowly away again, as a young man with more swinging grandeur of colours and fur and plumes, and with greater glitterings of gems and silver, passed by, a sword clattering after him.

Meanwhile John Broom had been round the corner and was back again.

'What for are ye stannin' there, ye fule?' asked his new friend. 'What for didna ye gang for the whusky?'

'It's here, sir.'

'My certy, ye dinna let the grass grow under your feet,' said the Highlander; and he added: 'If ye want to run errands, laddie, ye can come back again.'

It was the beginning of a fresh life for John Broom. With many other idle or homeless boys he now haunted the barracks, and ran errands for the soldiers. His fleetness of foot and ready wit made him the favourite. Perhaps too his



youth and his bright face and eyes pleaded for him, for British soldiers are a tender-hearted race.

He was knocked about, but never cruelly, and he got plenty of coppers and broken victuals, and now and then an old cap or pair of boots a world too large for him. His principal errands were to fetch liquor for the soldiers. In arms and pockets he would sometimes carry a dozen bottles at once, and fly back from the canteen or public-house without breaking one.

Before the summer was over he was familiar with every barrack-room and guard-room in the place; he had food to eat and coppers to spare, and he shared his bits with the mongrel dogs who lived, as he did, on the good nature of the garrison.

It must be confessed that neatness was not among John Broom's virtues. He looped his rags together with bits of string, and wasted his pence or lost them. The soldiers standing at the bar would often give him a drink out of their pewter pots. It choked him at first, and then he got used to it, and liked it. Some relics of Miss Betty's teaching kept him honest. He would not condescend to sip by the way out of the soldiers' jugs and bottles as other errand-boys did, but he came to feel rather proud of laying his twopence on the counter, and emptying his own pot of beer with a grimace to the bystanders through the glass at the bottom.

One day he was winking through the froth of a pint of porter at the canteen's sergeant's daughter, who was in fits of laughing, when the pewter was knocked out of his grasp, and the big Highlander's hand was laid on his shoulder and bore him twenty or thirty yards from the place in one swoop.

'I'll trouble ye to give me your attention,' said the Highlander, when they came to a standstill, 'and to speak the truth. Did ye ever see me the worse of liquor?'

John Broom had several remembrances of the clearest kind to that effect, so he put up his arms to shield his head from the probable blow, and said: 'Yes, M'Alistair.'



‘How often?’ asked the Scotchman.

‘I never counted,’ said John Broom; ‘pretty often.’

‘How many good conduct stripes do you ken me to have lost of your ain knowledge?’

‘Three, M’Alister.’

‘Is there a finer man than me in the regiment?’ asked the Highlander, drawing up his head.

‘That there’s not,’ said John Broom warmly.

'Our sairgent, now,' drawled the Scotchman, 'wad ye say he was a better man than me?'

'Nothing like so good,' said John Broom sincerely.

'And what d'ye suppose, man,' said the Highlander, firing with sudden passion, till the light of his clear blue eyes seemed to pierce John Broom's very soul, 'what d'ye suppose has hindered me that I'm not sairgent, when yon man is? What has keepit me from being an officer, that had served my country in twa battles when oor quartermaster hadna enlisted? Wha gets my money? What lost me my stripes? What loses me decent folks' respect and, waur than that, my ain? What gars a hand that can grip a broadsword tremble like a woman's? What fills the canteen and the kirkyard? What robs a man of health and wealth and peace? What ruins weans and women, and makes mair homes desolate than war? Drink, man, drink! The deevil of drink!'

It was not till the glare in his eyes had paled that John Broom ventured to speak. Then he said:

'Why don't ye give it up, M'Alister?'

The man rose to his full height, and laid his hand heavily on the boy's shoulder, and his eyes seemed to fade with that pitiful, weary look, which only such blue eyes show so well. 'Because I *canna*,' said he; 'because, for as big as I am, I canna. But for as little as you are, laddie, ye can, and, Heaven help me, ye shall.'

That evening he called John Broom into the barrack-room where he slept. He was sitting on the edge of his bed, and had a little wooden money-box in his hands.

'What money have ye, laddie?' he asked.

John Broom pulled out three halfpence lately earned, and the Scotchman dropped them slowly into the box. Then he turned the key, and put it into his pocket, and gave the box to the boy.

'Ye'll put what ye earn in there,' said he. 'I'll keep the key, and ye'll keep the box yoursel'; and when it's opened

*we'll open it together, and lay out your savings in decent clothes for ye against the winter.'*

At this moment some men passing to the canteen shouted, 'M'Alistair!' The Highlander did not answer, but he started to the door. Then he stood irresolute, and then turned and reseated himself.

'Gang and bring me a bit o' tobacco,' he said, giving John Broom a penny. And when the boy had gone he emptied his pocket of the few pence left, and dropped them into the box, muttering: 'If he manna, I wunna.'

And when the tobacco came, he lit his pipe, and sat on the bench outside, and snarled at everyone who spoke to him.

## *Outpost Duty—The Sergeant's Story—Grand Rounds*

**I**T WAS a bitterly cold winter. The soldiers drank a great deal, and John Broom was constantly trotting up and down, and the box grew very heavy.

Bottles were filled and refilled, in spite of greatly increased strictness in the discipline of the garrison, for there were rumours of invasion, and penalties were heavy, and sentry posts were increased, and the regiments were kept in readiness for action.

The Highlander had not cured himself of drinking, though he had cured John Broom. But, like others, he was more wary just now, and had hitherto escaped the heavy punishments inflicted in a time of probable war; and John Broom watched over him with the fidelity of a sheep-dog, and more than once had roused him with a can of cold water when he was all but caught by his superiors in a state of stupor, which would not have been credited to the frost alone.

The talk of invasion had become grave, when one day a body of men were ordered for outpost duty, and M'Alister was among them. The officer had got a room for them in a farmhouse, where they sat round the fire, and went out by turns to act as sentries at various posts for an hour or two at a time.

The novelty was delightful to John Broom. He hung about the farmhouse, and warmed himself at the soldiers' fire.

In the course of the day M'Alister got him apart, and whispered: 'I'm going on duty the night at ten, laddie. It's fearsome cold, and I hav'na had a drop to warm me the day. If ye could ha' brought me a wee drappie to the corner of the three roads—it's twa miles from here, I'm thinking——'

'It's not the miles, M'Alister,' said John Broom, 'but you're on outpost duty, and——'

'And you're misdoubting what may be done to ye for bringing liquor to a sentry on duty? Aye, aye, lad, ye do weel to be cautious,' said the Highlander, and he turned away.

But it was not the fear of consequences to himself which had made John Broom hesitate, and he was stung by the implication.

The night was dark and very cold, and the Highlander had been pacing up and down his post for about half an hour, when his quick ear caught a faint sound of footsteps.

'Wha goes there?' said he.

'It's I, M'Alister,' whispered John Broom.

'Whisht, laddie,' said the sentry; 'are ye there after all? Did no one see ye?'

'Not a soul; I crept by the hedges. Here's your whisky, M'Alister; but oh be careful!' said the lad.

The Scotchman's eyes glittered greedily at the bottle.

'Never fear,' said he, 'I'll just rub a wee drappie on the pawms of my hands to keep away the frost-bite, for it's awsome cold, man. Now away wi' ye, and take tent, laddie, keep off the other sentries.'

John Broom went back as carefully as he had come, and slipped in to warm himself by the guard-room fire.

It was a good one, and the soldiers sat close round it. The officer was writing a letter in another room, and in a low, impressive voice the sergeant was telling a story which was listened to with breathless attention. John Broom was fond of stories, and he listened also.

It was a friend of the sergeant's, who had been a boy with him in the same village at home, who had seen active service with him abroad, and who had slept at his post on such a night as this, from the joint effects of cold and drink. It was war time, and he had been tried by court-martial, and shot for the offence. The sergeant had been one of the firing party to execute his friend, and they had taken leave of each

other as brothers, before the final parting face to face in this last awful scene.

The man's voice was faltering, when the tale was cut short by the jingling of the field officer's accoutrements as he rode



by to visit the outposts. in an instant the officer and men turned out to receive him; and, after the usual formalities, he rode on. The officer went back to his letter, and the sergeant and his men to their fireside.

The opening of the doors had let in a fresh volume of cold, and one of the men called to John Broom to mend the fire. But he was gone.

John Broom was fleet of foot, and there are certain moments which lift men beyond their natural powers, but he had set himself a hard task.

As he listened to the sergeant's tale, an agonizing fear smote him for his friend M'Alister. Was there any hope that the Highlander could keep himself from the whisky?

*Officers were making their rounds at very short intervals just now, and if drink and cold overcame him at his post!*

Close upon these thoughts came the jingling of the field officer's sword, and the turn out of the guard. 'Who goes there?'—'Rounds.'—'What rounds?'—'Grand rounds.'—'Halt, grand rounds, advance one, and give the counter-sign!' The familiar words struck coldly on John Broom's heart, as if they had been orders to a firing party, and the bandage was already across the Highlander's blue eyes. Would the grand rounds be challenged at the three roads tonight? He darted out into the snow.

He flew, as the crow flies, across the fields, to where M'Alister was on duty. It was a much shorter distance than by the road, which was winding; but whether this would balance the difference between a horse's pace and his own was the question, and there being no time to question he ran on.

He kept his black head down, and ran from his shoulders. The clatter, clatter, jingle, jingle, on the hard road came to him through the still frost on a level with his left ear. It was terrible, but he held on, dodging under the hedges to be out of sight, and the sound lessened, and by and by, the road having wound about, he could hear it faintly, *but behind him.*

And he reached the three roads, and M'Alister was asleep in the ditch.

But when, with jingle and clatter, the field officer of the day reached the spot, the giant Highlander stood like a watch-tower at his post, with a little snow on the black plumes that drooped upon his shoulders.



## *Hospital—‘Hame’*

**J**OHAN BROOM did not see the Highlander again for two or three days. It was Christmas week, and, in spite of the war panic, there was festivity enough in the barracks to keep the errand-boy very busy.

Then came New Year’s Eve—‘Hogmanay’, as the Scotch call it—and it was the Highland regiment’s particular festival. Worn out with whisky fetching, and with helping to deck barrack-rooms and carrying pots and trestles, John Broom was having a nap in the evening, in company with a deer-hound, when a man shook him, and said: ‘I heard someone asking for ye an hour or two back; M’Alister wants ye.’

‘Where is he?’ said John Broom, jumping to his feet.

‘In hospital; he’s been there a day or two. He got cold on outpost duty, and it’s flown to his lungs, they say. Ye see, he’s been a hard drinker, has M’Alister, and I expect he’s breaking up.’

With which very just conclusion the speaker went on into the canteen, and John Broom ran to the hospital.

Stripped of his picturesque trappings, and with no plumes to shadow the hollows in his temples, M’Alister looked gaunt and feeble enough, as he lay in the little hospital bed, which barely held his long limbs. Such a wreck of giant powers of body and noble qualities of mind as the drink-shops are preparing for the hospitals every day!

Since the quickly reached medical decision that he was in a rapid decline, and that nothing could be done for him, M’Alister had been left a good deal alone. His intellect (and it was no fool’s intellect) was quite clear, and if the long hours by himself, in which he reckoned with his own soul,

had hastened the death-damps on his brow, they had also written there an expression which was new to John Broom. It was not the old sour look, it was a kind of noble gravity.

His light-blue eyes brightened as the boy came in, and he held out his hand, and John Broom took it with both his, saying: 'I never heard till this minute, M'Alister. Eh, I do hope you'll be better soon.'

'The Lord being merciful to me,' said the Highlander. 'But *this* world's nearly past, laddie, and I was fain to see ye again. Dinna greet, man, for I've important business wi' ye, and I should wish your attention. Firstly, I'm aboot to hand over to ye the key of your box. Tak' it, and put it in a pocket that's no got a hole in it, if you're worth one. Secondly, there's a bit bag I made mysel', and it's got a trifle o' money in it that I'm giving and bequeathing to ye, under certain conditions, namely, that ye shall spend the contents of the box according to my last wishes and instructions, with the ultimate end of your ain benefit, ye'll understand.'

A fit of coughing here broke M'Alister's discourse; but, after drinking from a cup beside him, he put aside John Broom's remonstrances with a dignified movement of his hand, and continued:

'When a body comes of decent folk, he won't just care, maybe, to have their names brought up in a barrack-room. Ye never heard me say aught of my father or my mither?'

'Never, M'Alister.'

'I'd a good hame,' said the Highlander, with a decent pride in his tone. 'It was a strict hame—I've no cause now to deceive mysel', and I'm thinking it was a wee bit ower strict—but it was a good hame. I left it, man—I ran away.' The glittering blue eyes turned sharply on the lad, and he went on: 'A body doesna' care to turn his byeganes oot for every fool to peck at. Did I ever speer about your past life, and whar ye came from?'

'Never, M'Alister.'

'But that's no to say that, if I knew manners, I didna obsairve. And there's been things now and again, John Broom, that's gar'd me think that ye've had what I had, and done as I did. Did ye rin away', laddie?'

John Broom nodded his black head, but tears choked his voice.

'Man!' said the Highlander, 'ane word's as gude's a thousand. Gang back! Gang hame! There's the bit siller here that's to tak' ye, and the love yonder that's waiting ye. Listen to a dying man, laddie, and gang hame!'

'I doubt if they'd have me,' sobbed John Broom, 'I gave 'em a deal of trouble, M'Alister.'

'And d'ye think, lad, that that thought has na' cursed *me*, and keepit me from them that loved me? Aye, lad, and till this week I never overcame it. Weel may I want to save ye, bairn,' added the Highlander tenderly, 'for it was the thocht of a' ye riskit for the like of me at the three roads, that made me consider wi' mysel' that I've aiblins been turning my back a' my wilfu' life on love that's bigger than a man's deservings. It's near done now, and it'll never lie in my poor power so much as rightly to thank ye. It's strange that a man should set store by a good name that he doesn' deserve; but if ony blessings of mine could bring ye good, they're yours, that saved an old soldier's honour, and let him die respectit in his regiment.'

'Oh, M'Alister, let me fetch one of the chaplains to write a letter to fetch your father,' cried John Broom.

'The minister's been here this morning,' said the Highlander, 'and I've tell't him mair than I've tell't you. And he's jest directed me to put my sinful trust in the Father of us a'. I've sinned heaviest against *Him*, laddie, but *His* love is stronger than the lave.'

John Broom remained by his friend, whose painful fits of coughing, and of gasping for breath, were varied by intervals of seeming stupor. When a candle had been brought in and placed near the bed, the Highlander roused himself and asked:

'Is there a Bible on yon table? Could ye read a bit to me, laddie?'

There is little need to dwell on the bitterness of heart with which John Broom confessed:

'I can't read big words, M'Alister.'

'Did ye never go to school?' said the Scotchman.

'I didn't learn,' said the poor boy; 'I played.'

'Aye, aye. Weel, ye'll learn when ye gang hame,' said the Highlander in gentle tones.

'I'll never get home,' said John Broom passionately. 'I'll never forgive myself. I'll never get over it, that I couldn't read to ye when ye wanted me, M'Alister.'

'Gently, gently,' said the Scotchman. 'Dinna daunt yoursel' owermuch wi' the past, laddie. And for me—I'm not that presoomtious to think I can square up a misspent life as a man might compound wi's creditors. 'Gin He forgi'es me, He'll forgi'e; but it's not a prayer up or a chapter down that'll stan' between me and the Almighty. So dinna fret yoursel', but let me think while I may.'

And so, far into the night, the Highlander lay silent, and John Broom watched by him.

It was just midnight when he partly raised himself, and cried:

'Whisht, laddie! do ye hear the pipes?'

The dying ears must have been quick, for John Broom heard nothing; but in a few moments he heard the bagpipes from the officers' mess, where they were keeping Hogmanay. They were playing the old year out with 'Auld lang syne', and the Highlander beat the tune out with his hand, and his eyes gleamed out of his rugged face in the dim light, as cairngorms glitter in dark tartan.

There was a pause after the first verse, and he grew restless, and turning doubtfully to where John Broom sat, as if his sight were failing, he said: 'Ye'll mind your promise—ye'll gang hame?' And after a while he repeated the last word:

*'Hame!'*

But as he spoke there settled over his face a smile so tender and so full of happiness, that John Broom held his breath as he watched him. As the light of sunrise creeps over the face of some rugged rock, it crept from chin to brow, and the pale blue eyes shone tranquil, like water that reflects heaven.

And when it had passed it left them still open, but gems that had lost their ray.

## *Luck Goes—And Comes Again*

THE SPIRIT does not always falter in its faith because the flesh is weary with hope deferred. When week after week, month after month and year after year went by and John Broom was not found, the disappointment seemed to 'age' the little ladies, as Thomasina phrased it. But yet they said to the parson: 'We do not regret it.'

'God forbid that you should regret it,' said he.

And even the lawyer (whose heart was kinder than his tongue) abstained from taunting them with his prophecies, and said: 'The force of the habits of early education is a power as well as that of inherent tendencies. It is only for your sake that I regret a too romantic benevolence.' And Miss Betty and Miss Kitty tried to put the matter quite away. But John Broom was very closely bound up with the life of many years past. Thomasina mourned him as if he had been her son, and Thomasina being an old and valuable servant, it is needless to say that when she was miserable no one in the house was permitted to be quite at ease.

As to Pretty Cocky, he lived, but Miss Kitty fancied that he grew less pretty and drooped upon his polished perch.

There were times when the parson felt almost conscience-stricken because he had encouraged the adoption of John Broom. Disappointments fall heavily upon elderly people. They may submit better than the young, but they do not so easily revive. The little old ladies looked greyer and more nervous, and the little old house looked greyer and gloomier than of old.

Indeed there were other causes of anxiety. Times were changing, prices were rising and the farm did not thrive. The lawyer said that the farm bailiff neglected his duties,

and that the cowherd did nothing but drink; but Miss Betty trembled, and said they could not part with old servants.

The farm bailiff had his own trouble, but he kept it to himself. No one knew how severely he had beaten John Broom the day before he ran away, but he remembered it himself with painful clearness. Harsh men are apt to have consciences, and his was far from easy about the lad who had been entrusted to his care. He could not help thinking of it when the day's work was over, and he had to keep filling up his evening whisky glass again and again to drown disagreeable thoughts.

The whisky answered this purpose, but it made him late in the morning; it complicated business on market days, not to the benefit of the farm, and it put him at a disadvantage in dealing with the drunken cowherd.

The cowherd was completely upset by John Broom's mysterious disappearance, and he comforted himself as the farm bailiff did, but to a larger extent. And Thomasina winked at many irregularities in consideration of the groans of sympathy with which he responded to her tears as they sat round the hearth where John Broom no longer lay.

At the time that he vanished from Lingborough the gossips of the countryside said: 'This comes of making pets of tramps' brats, when honest folk's sons may toil and moil without notice.' But when it was proved that the tramp boy had stolen nothing, when all search for him was vain, and when prosperity faded from the place season by season and year by year, there were old folk who whispered that the gaudily clothed child Miss Betty had found under the broom bush had something more than common in him, and that, whoever and whatever had offended the eerie creature, he had taken the luck of Lingborough with him when he went away.

It was early summer. The broom was shining in the hedges with uncommon wealth of golden blossoms. 'The lanes look for all the world as they did the year that poor child was

found,' said Thomasina, wiping her eyes. Annie the lass sobbed hysterically, and the cowherd found himself so low in spirits that, after gazing dismally at the cow-stalls, which had not been cleaned for days past, he betook himself to the ale-house to refresh his energies for this and other arrears of work.

On returning to the farm, however, he found his hands still feeble, and he took a drop or two more to steady them, after which it occurred to him that certain new potatoes which he had had orders to dig were yet in the ground. The wood was not chopped for the next day's use, and he wondered what had become of a fork he had had in the morning and had laid down somewhere.

So he seated himself on some straw in the corner to think about it all, and whilst he was thinking he fell fast asleep.

By his own account many remarkable things had befallen him in the course of his life, including that meeting with a black Something to which allusion has been made, but nothing so strange as what happened to him that night.

When he awoke in the morning, and sat up on the straw and looked around him, the stable was freshly cleaned, the litter in the stalls was shaken and turned, and near the door was an old barrel of newly dug potatoes, and the fork stood by it. And when he ran to the wood-house there lay the wood neatly chopped and piled to take away.

He kept his own counsel that day and took credit for the work, but when on the morrow the farm bailiff was at a loss to know who had thinned the turnips that were left to do in the upper field, and Annie the lass found the kitchen cloths she had left overnight to soak, rubbed through and rinsed, and laid to dry, the cowherd told his tale to Thomasina, and begged for a bowl of porridge and cream to set in the barn, as one might set a mouse-trap baited with cheese.

'For,' said he, 'the luck of Lingborough's come back, missis. *It's Lob Lie-by-the-fire!*'



## *Lob Lie-by-the-fire*

‘**I**t’s Lob Lie-by-the-fire!’

So Thomasina whispered exultingly and Annie the lass timidly. Thomasina cautioned the cowherd to hold his tongue, and she said nothing to the little ladies on the subject. She felt certain that they would tell the parson, and he might not approve. The farm bailiff knew of a farm on the Scotch side of the Border where a brownie had been driven away by the minister preaching his last Sunday’s sermon over again at him, and as Thomasina said, ‘There’d been little enough luck at Lingborough lately, that they should wish to scare it away when it came.’

And yet the news leaked out gently, and was soon known all through the neighbourhood—as a secret.

‘The luck of Lingborough’s come back. Lob’s lying by the fire!’

He could be heard at his work any night, and several people had seen him, though this vexed Thomasina, who knew well that the Good People do not like to be watched at their labours.

The cowherd had not been able to resist peeping down through chinks in the floor of the loft above the barn where he slept, and one night he had seen Lob fetching straw for the cowhouse. ‘A great rough, black fellow,’ said he, and he certainly grew bigger and rougher and blacker every time the cowherd told the tale.

The Lubber-fiend appeared next to a boy who was loitering at a late hour somewhere near the little ladies’ kitchen garden, and whom he pursued and pelted with mud till the lad nearly lost his wits with terror. (It was the same boy who was put in the lock-up in the autumn for stealing Farmer Mangel’s Siberian crabs.)

For this trick, however, the rough elf atoned by leaving three pecks of newly gathered fruit in the kitchen the following morning. Never had there been such a preserving season at Lingborough within the memory of Thomasina.



The truth is, hobgoblins, from Puck to Will-o'-the-wisp, are apt to play practical jokes and knock people about whom they meet after sunset. A dozen tales of such were rife, and folks were more amused than amazed by Lob Lie-by-the-fire's next prank.

There was an aged pauper who lived on the charity of the little ladies, and whom it was Miss Betty's practice to employ to do light weeding in the fields for heavy wages. This venerable person was toddling to his home in the gloaming with a barrow load of Miss Betty's new potatoes, dexterously hidden by an upper sprinkling of groundsel and hemlock, when the Lubber-fiend sprang out from behind an elder bush, ran at the old man with his black head, and knocked him, heels uppermost, into the ditch. The wheelbarrow was afterwards found in Miss Betty's farmyard, quite empty.

And when the cowherd (who had his own opinion of the aged pauper, and it was a very poor one) went that evening to drink Lob Lie-by-the-fire's health from a bottle he kept in the harness-room window, he was nearly choked with the contents, which had turned into salt and water, as fairy jewels turn to withered leaves.

But luck had come to Lingborough. There had not been such crops for twice seven years past.

The lay-away hens' eggs were brought regularly to the kitchen.

The ducklings were not eaten by rats.

No fowls were stolen.

The tub of pig-meal lasted three times as long as usual.

The cart wheels and gate hinges were oiled by unseen fingers.

The mushrooms in the croft gathered themselves and lay down on a dish in the larder.

It is by small savings that a farm thrives, and Miss Betty's farm thrive.

Everybody worked with more alacrity. Annie the lass said the butter came in a way that made it a pleasure to churn.

The neighbours knew even more than those on the spot. They said:

That since Lob came back to Lingborough the hens laid eggs as large as turkeys' eggs, and the turkeys' eggs were—oh, you wouldn't believe the size!

That the cows gave nothing but cream, and that Thomasina skimmed butter off it as less lucky folk skim cream from milk.

That her cheeses were as rich as butter.

That she sold all she made, for Lob took the fairy butter from the old trees in the avenue, and made it up into pats for Miss Betty's table.

That if you bought Lingborough turnips, you might feed your cows on them all the winter and the milk would be as sweet as new-mown hay..

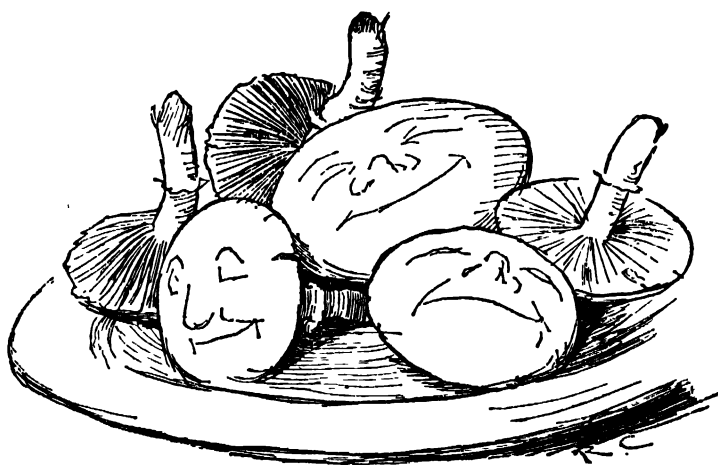
That horses foddered on Lingborough hay would have thrice the strength of others, and that sheep who cropped Lingborough pastures would grow three times as fat.

That for as good a watch-dog as it was, the sheep-dog never barked at Lob, a plain proof that he was more than human.



That for all its good luck it was not safe to loiter near the place after dark, if you wished to keep your senses. And if you took so much as a fallen apple belonging to Miss Betty, you might look out for palsy or St Vitus's dance, or be carried off bodily to the underground folk.

Finally, that it was well all the cows gave double, for that Lob Lie-by-the-fire drank two gallons of the best cream every day, with curds, porridge and other dainties to match. But what did that matter, when he had been overheard to swear that luck should not leave Lingborough till Miss Betty owned half the countryside?

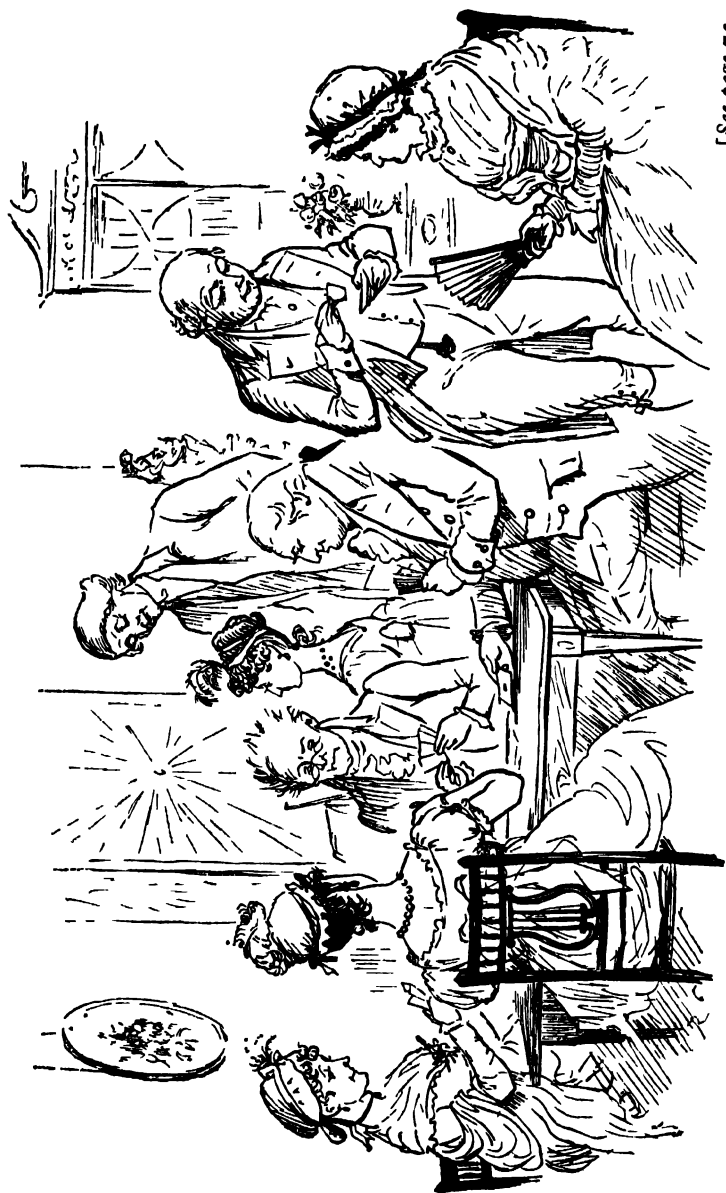


### *Miss Betty is Surprised*

MISS BETTY and Miss Kitty, having accepted a polite invitation from Mrs General Dunmaw, went down to tea with that lady one fine evening in this eventful summer.

Death had made a gap of two in the familiar circle during the last fourteen years, but otherwise it was quite the same, except that the lawyer was married and not quite so sarcastic, and that Mrs Brown Jasey had brought a young niece with her dressed in the latest fashion, which looked quite as odd as new fashions are wont to do, and with a *coiffure* 'enough to frighten the French away', as her aunt told her.

It was while this young lady was getting more noise out of Mrs Dunmaw's red silk and rosewood piano than had been shaken out of it during the last thirty years, that the lawyer brought his cup of coffee to Miss Betty's side, and said suavely: 'I hear wonderful accounts of Lingborough, dear Miss Betty.'



... the lawyer brought his cup of coffee to Miss Betty's side

[See page 73]

'I am thankful to say, sir, that the farm is doing well this year. I am very thankful, for the past few years have been unfavourable, and we had begun to face the fact that it might be necessary to sell the old place. And I will not deny, sir, that it would have gone far to break my heart, to say nothing of my sister Kitty's.'

'Oh, we shouldn't have let it come to that,' said the lawyer. 'I could have raised a loan——'

'Sir,' said Miss Betty with dignity, 'if we have our own pride, I hope it's an honest one. Lingborough will have passed out of our family when it's kept up on borrowed money.'

'I *could* live in lodgings,' added Miss Betty firmly, 'little as I've been accustomed to it, but *not in debt*.'

'Well, well, my dear madam, we needn't talk about it now. But I'm dying of curiosity as to the mainstay of all this good luck.'

'The turnips——' began Miss Betty.

'Bless my soul, Miss Betty!' cried the lawyer. 'I'm not talking of turnips. I'm talking of Lob Lie-by-the-fire, as all the countryside is for that matter.'

'The country people have plenty of tales of him,' said Miss Betty, with some pride in the family goblin. 'He used to haunt the old barns, they say, in my great-grandfather's time.'

'And now you've got him back again,' said the lawyer.

'Not that I know of,' said Miss Betty.

On which the lawyer poured into her astonished ear all the latest news on the subject, and if it had lost nothing before reaching his house in the town, it rather gained in marvels as he repeated it to Miss Betty.

No wonder that the little lady was anxious to get home to question Thomasina, and that somewhat before the usual hour she said:

'Sister Kitty, if it's not too soon for the servant——'

And the parson, threading his way to where Mrs

Dunmaw's China crape shawl (dyed crimson) shone in the bow-window, said, 'The clergy should keep respectable hours, madam; especially when they are as old as I am. Will you allow me to thank you for a very pleasant evening, and to say good night?'



## *The Parson and the Lubber-fiend*

‘Do you think there’d be any harm in leaving it alone, sister Betty?’ said Miss Kitty tremulously.

They had reached Lingborough, and the parson had come in with them, by Miss Betty’s request, and Thomasina had been duly examined.

‘Eh, Miss Betty, why should ye chase away good luck with the minister?’ cried she.

‘Sister Kitty! Thomasina!’ said Miss Betty. ‘I would not accept good luck from a doubtful quarter to save Lingborough. But if It can face this excellent clergyman, the Being who haunted my great-grandfather’s farm is still welcome to the old barns, and you, Thomasina, need not grudge It cream or curds.’

You’re quite right, sister Betty,’ said Miss Kitty. ‘You always are; but oh dear, oh dear!’

‘Thomasina tells me’, said Miss Betty, turning to the parson, ‘that on chilly evenings It sometimes comes and lies by the kitchen fire after they have gone to bed, and I can distinctly remember my grandmother mentioning the same thing. Thomasina has of late left the kitchen door on the latch for Its convenience, and as they had to sit up late for us, she and Annie have taken their work into the still-room to leave the kitchen free for Lob Lie-by-the-fire. They have not looked into the kitchen this evening, as such beings do not like to be watched. But they fancy that they heard It come in. I trust, sir, that neither in myself nor my sister Kitty does timidity exceed a proper feminine sensibility, where duty is concerned. If you will be good enough to precede us, we will go to meet the old friend of my great-grandfather’s fortunes, and we leave it entirely to your valuable discretion to pursue what course you think proper on the occasion.’

'Is this the door?' said the parson cheerfully, after knocking his head against black beams and just saving his legs down shallow and unexpected steps on his way to the kitchen—beams so unfelt and steps so familiar to the women that it had never struck them that the long passage was not the most straightforward walk a man could take. 'I think you said It generally lies on the hearth?'

The happy thought struck Thomasina that the parson might be frightened out of his unlucky interference.

'Aye, aye, sir,' said she from behind. 'We've heard him rolling by the fire, and growling like thunder to himself. They say he's an awful size, too, with the strength of four men, and a long tail, and eyes like coals of fire.'

But Thomasina spoke in vain, for the parson opened the door, and as they pressed in the moonlight streaming through the latticed window showed Lob lying by the fire.

'There's his tail! Ay——k!' screeched Annie the lass, and away she went, without drawing breath, to the top garret, where she locked and bolted herself in, and sat her bandbox flat, and screamed for help.

But it was the plummy tail of the sheep-dog, who was lying there with the Lubber-fiend. And Lob was asleep, with his arms round the sheep-dog's neck, and the sheep-dog's head lay on his breast, and his own head touched the dog's.

And it was a smaller head than the parson had been led to expect, and it had thick black hair.

As the parson bent over the hearth, Thomasina took Miss Kitty round the waist, and Miss Betty clutched her black velvet bag till the steel beads ran into her hands, and they were quite prepared for an explosion and sulphur and blue lights and thunder.

And then the parson's deep, round voice broke the silence, saying:

'Is that you, lad? God bless you, John Broom. You're welcome home!'

## *The End*

SOME THINGS—such as gossip—gain in the telling, but there are others before which words fail, though each heart knows its own power of sympathy. And such was the joy of the little ladies and of Thomasina at John Broom's return.

The sheep-dog had had his satisfaction out long ago, and had kept it to himself, but how Pretty Cocky crowed and chuckled and danced and bowed his crest, and covered his face with his amber wings, and kicked his seed-pot over, and spilled his water-pot on to the Derbyshire marble chess table, and screamed till the room rang again, and went on screaming, with Miss Kitty's pocket-handkerchief over his head to keep him quiet, my poor pen can but imperfectly describe.

The desire to atone for the past which had led John Broom to act the part of one of those Good-fellows who have, we must fear, finally deserted us, will be easily understood. And to a nature of his type, the earning of some self-respect, and of a new character before others, was perhaps a necessary prelude to future well-doing.

He did do well. He became 'a good scholar', as farmers were then. He spent as much of his passionate energies on the farm as the farm would absorb, and he restrained the rest. It is not cockatoos only who have sometimes to live and be happy in this unfinished life with one wing clipped.

In fine weather, when the perch was put into the garden, Miss Betty was sometimes startled by stumbling on John Broom in the dusk, sitting on his heels, the unfastened chain in his hand, with his black head lovingly laid against Cocky's white and yellow poll, talking in a low voice, and apparently

with the sympathy of his companion; and, as Miss Betty justly feared, of that 'other side of the world', which they both knew, and which both at times had cravings to revisit.

Even after the sobering influences of middle age had touched him, and a wife and children bound him with the quiet ties of home, he had (at long intervals) his 'restless times', when his good 'missis' would bring out a little store laid by in one of the children's socks and would bid him 'Be off, and get a breath of the sea air', but on condition that the sock went with him as his purse. John Broom always looked ashamed to go, but he came back the better, and his wife was quite easy in his absence with that confidence in her knowledge of 'the master', which is so mysterious to the unmarried, and which Miss Betty looked upon as 'want of feeling' to the end. She always dreaded that he would not return, and a little ruse which she adopted, of giving him money to make bargains for foreign articles of *vertu* with the sailors, is responsible for many of the choicest ornaments in the Lingborough parlour.

'The sock'll bring him home,' said Mrs Broom, and home he came, and never could say what he had been doing. Nor was the account given by Thomasina's cousin, who was a tide-waiter down yonder, particularly satisfying to the women's curiosity. He said that John Broom was always about; that he went aboard all the craft in the bay, and asked whence they came and whither they were bound. That, being once taunted to it, he went up the rigging of a big vessel like a cat, and came down it looking like a fool. That, as a rule, he gossiped and shared his tobacco with sailors and fishermen, and brought out the sock much oftener than was prudent for the benefit of the ragged boys who haunt the quay.

He had two other weaknesses, which a faithful biographer must chronicle.

A regiment on the march would draw him from the plough-tail itself, and 'With daddy to see the pretty soldiers'

was held to excuse any of Mrs Broom's children from household duties.

The other shall be described in the graphic language of that acute observer the farm bailiff.

'If there cam' an Irish beggar, wi' a stripy cloot roond him and a bellows under 's arm, and ca'd himsel' a Hielander, the lad wad gi'e him his silly head off his shoulders.'

As to the farm bailiff, perhaps no one felt more or said less than he did on John Broom's return. But the tones of his voice had tender associations for the boy's ears as he took off his speckled hat, and after contemplating the inside for some moments, put it on again, and said.

'Aweel, lad, sae ye've cam' hame?'

But he listened with quivering face when John Broom told the story of M'Alister, and when it was ended he rose and went out, and 'took the pledge' against drink, and—kept it.

Moved by similar enthusiasm, the cowherd took the pledge also, and if he didn't keep it he certainly drank less, chiefly owing to the vigilant oversight of the farm bailiff, who now exercised his natural severity almost exclusively in the denunciation of all liquors whatsoever, from the cowherd's whisky to Thomasina's elder-flower wine.

The plain cousin left his money to the little old ladies, and Lingborough continued to flourish.

Partly perhaps because of this, it is doubtful if John Broom was ever looked upon by the rustics as quite 'like other folk'.

The favourite version of his history is that he was Lob under the guise of a child; that he was driven away by new clothes; that he returned from unwillingness to see an old family go to ruin 'which he had served for hundreds of years'; that the parson preached his last Sunday's sermon at him; and that, having stood that test, he took his place among Christian people.

Whether a name invented offhand, however plain and

sensible, does not stick to a man as his father's does, is a question. But John Broom was not often called by his.

With Scotch caution, the farm bailiff seldom exceeded the safe title of 'Man!' and the parson was apt to address him as 'My dear boy' when he had certainly outgrown the designation.

Miss Betty called him John Broom, but the people called him by the name he had earned.

And long after his black hair lay white and thick on his head, like snow on the old barn roof, and when his dark eyes were dim in an honoured old age, the village children would point him out to each other, crying, 'There goes Lob Lie-by-the-fire, the Luck of Lingborough!'



*THE STORY OF A SHORT LIFE*

‘But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind Fury with the abhoréd shears  
And slits the thin spun life.—“But not the praise.”’

MILTON.

‘It is a calumny on men to say that they are roused to heroic action by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense,—sugar-plums of any kind in this world or the next! In the meanest mortal there lies something nobler. . . . Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death are the *allurements* that act on the heart of man. Kindle the inner genial life of him, you have a flame that burns up all lower considerations. . . . Not by flattering our appetites; no, by awakening the Heroic that slumbers in every heart——. . . ’ CARLYLE.



## Chapter I

'Arma virumque cano.' *Æneid*.

'Man—and the horseradish—are most biting when grated.'

JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

MOST ANNOYING!' said the Master of the House. His thick eyebrows were puckered just then with the vexation of his thoughts; but the lines of annoyance on his forehead were to some extent fixed lines. They helped to make him look older than his age—he was not forty—and they gathered into a fierce frown as his elbow was softly touched by his little son.

The child was defiantly like his father, even to a knitted brow, for his whole face was crumpled with the vigour of some resolve which he found it hard to keep, and which was symbolized by his holding the little red tip of his tongue betwixt finger and thumb.

'Put your hands down, Leonard! Put your tongue in, sir! What are you after? What do you want? What are you doing here? Be off to the nursery, and tell Jemima to keep you there. Your mother and I are busy.'

Far behind the boy, on the wall, hung the portrait of one of his ancestors—a youth of sixteen. The painting was by Van Dyck, and it was the most valuable of the many valuable things that strewed and decorated the room. A very perfect example of the great master's work, and uninjured by Time. The young Cavalier's face was more interesting than handsome, but so eager and refined that, set off as it was by pale-hued satin and falling hair, he might have been called effeminate, if his brief life, which ended on the field of Naseby, had not done more than common to prove his manhood. A coat-of-arms, blazoned in the corner of the painting, had some appearance of having been added later.

Below this was rudely inscribed, in yellow paint, the motto which also decorated the elaborate stone mantelpiece opposite—'*Lætus sorte mea*'.

Leonard was very fond of that picture. It was known to his childish affections as 'Uncle Rupert'. He constantly wished that he could get into the frame and play with the dog—the dog with the upturned face and melancholy eyes, and odd resemblance to a long-haired Cavalier—on whose faithful head Uncle Rupert's slender fingers perpetually reposed.

Though not able to play with the dog, Leonard did play with Uncle Rupert—the game of trying to get out of the reach of his eyes.

'I play "Puss-in-the-corner" with him,' the child was wont to explain; 'but whichever corner I get into, his eyes come after me. The dog looks at Uncle Rupert always, and Uncle Rupert always looks at me.'

'... to see if you are growing up a good boy and a gallant young gentleman, such as he was.' So Leonard's parents and guardians explained the matter to him, and he devoutly believed them.

Many an older and less credulous spectator stood in the light of those painted eyes, and acknowledged their spell. Very marvellous was the cunning which, by dabs and streaks of colour, had kept the spirit of this long dead youth to gaze at his descendants from a sheet of canvas and stir the sympathy of strangers, parted by more than two centuries from his sorrows, with the mock melancholy of painted tears. For whether the painter had just overdone some trick of representing their liquidness, or whether the boy's eyes had brimmed over as he was standing for his portrait (his father and elder brother had died in the civil war before him), there remains no tradition to tell. But Van Dyck never painted a portrait fuller of sad dignity, even in those troubled times.

Happily for his elders, Leonard invented for himself a reason for the obvious tears.

'I believe Uncle Rupert knew that they were going to chop the poor king's head off, and that's why he looked as if he were going to cry.'

It was partly because the child himself looked as if he were going to cry—and that not fractiously, but despite a struggle with himself—that, as he stood before the Master of the House, he might have been that other master of the same house come to life again at six years of age. His long, fair hair, the pliable, nervous fingers, which he had put down as he was bid, the strenuous tension of his little figure under a sense of injustice, and, above all, his beautiful eyes, in which the tears now brimmed over the eyelashes as the waters of a lake well up through the reeds that fringe its banks. He was very very like Uncle Rupert when he turned those eyes on his mother in mute reproach.

Lady Jane came to his defence.

'I think Leonard meant to be good. I made him promise me to try and cure himself of the habit of speaking to you when you are speaking to someone else. But, dear Leonard'—and she took the hand that had touched his father's elbow—'I don't think you were quite on honour when you interrupted Father with this hand, though you were holding your tongue with the other. That is what we call keeping a promise to the ear and breaking it to the sense.'

All the Cavalier dignity came unstarched in Leonard's figure. With a red face, he answered bluntly: 'I'm very sorry. I meant to keep my promise.'

'Next time keep it *well*, as a gentleman should. Now, what do you want?'

'Pencil and paper, please.'

'There they are. Take them to the nursery, as Father told you.'

Leonard looked at his father. He had not been spoilt for six years by an irritable and indulgent parent without learning those arts of diplomacy in which children quickly become experts.

'Oh, he can stay,' said the Master of the House, 'and he may say a word now and then, if he doesn't talk too much. Boys can't sit mumchance always—can they, Len? There—kiss your poor old father, and get away, and keep quiet.'

Lady Jane made one of many fruitless efforts on behalf of discipline.

'I think, dear, as you told him to go, he had better go now.'

'He *will* go, pretty sharp, if he isn't good. Now, for pity's sake let's talk out this affair, and let me get back to my work.'

'Have you been writing poetry this morning, Father dear?' Leonard inquired urbanely.

He was now lolling against a writing-table of the First Empire, where sheets of paper lay like fallen leaves among Japanese bronzes, old and elaborate candlesticks, grotesque letter-clips and paper-weights, quaint pottery, big seals, and spring flowers in slender Venetian glasses of many colours.

'I wrote three lines, and was interrupted four times,' replied his sire with bitter brevity.

'I think I'll write some poetry. I don't mind being interrupted. May I have your ink?'

'No, you may *not*!' roared the Master of the House and of the inkpot of priceless china which Leonard had seized. 'Now, be off to the nursery!'

'I won't touch anything. I am going to draw out of the window,' said Leonard calmly.

He had practised the art of being troublesome to the verge of expulsion ever since he had had a whim of his own, and as skilfully as he played other games. He was seated among the cushions of the oriel window-seat (coloured rays from coats-of-arms in the upper panes falling on his fair hair with a fanciful effect of canonizing him for his sudden goodness) almost before his father could reply.

'I advise you to stay there, and to keep quiet.' Lady Jane took up the broken thread of conversation in despair.

'Have you ever seen him?'

'Yes; years ago.'

'You know I never saw either. Your sister was much older than you; wasn't she?'

*'The shadows move so on the grass, and the elms have so many branches, I think I shall turn round and draw the fireplace,' murmured Leonard.*

'Ten years. You may be sure, if I had been grown up I should never have allowed the marriage. I cannot think what possessed my father——'

*'I am doing the inscription! I can print Old English. What does L, diphthong Æ, T, U, S mean?'* said Leonard.

*'It means joyful, contented, happy—*I was at Eton at the time. Disastrous ill luck!'

'Are there any children?'

'One son. And to crown all, *his* regiment is at Asholt. Nice family party!'

'A young man! Has he been well brought up?'

*'What does——'*

*'Will you hold your tongue, Leonard?—*Is he likely to have been well brought up? However, he's "in the Service", as they say. I wish it didn't make one think of flunkeys, what with the word service, and the liveries (I mean uniforms), and the legs, and shoulders, and swagger, and tag-rags, and epaulettes, and the fatiguing alertness and attentiveness of "men in the Service".'

The Master of the House spoke with the pettish accent of one who says what he does not mean, partly for lack of something better to do, and partly to avenge some inward vexation upon his hearers. He lounged languidly on a couch, but Lady Jane sat upright, and her eyes gave an unwonted flash. She came of an ancient Scottish race, that had shed its blood like water on many a battlefield, generations before the family of her English husband had become favourites at the Court of the Tudors.

'I have so many military belongings, both in the past and the present, that I have a respect for the Service——'

He got up, and patted her head, and smiled.

'I beg your pardon, my child. *Et ego*——' and he looked at Uncle Rupert, who looked sadly back again; 'but you must make allowances for me. Asholt Camp has been a thorn in my side from the first. And now to have the barrack master, and the youngest subaltern of a marching regiment——'

'He's our nephew, Rupert!'

'Mine—not yours. You've nothing to do with him, thank goodness.'

'Your people are my people. Now do not worry yourself. *Of course* I shall call on your sister at once. Will they be here for some time?'

'Five years, you may depend. He's just the sort of man to wedge himself into a snug berth at Asholt. You're an angel, Jane; you always are. But fighting ancestors are one thing, a barrack master brother-in-law is another.'

'Has he done any fighting?'

'Oh dear, yes! Be-medalled like that Guy Fawkes General in the pawnbroker's window, that Len was so charmed by. But, my dear, I assure you——'

'*I only just want to know what S, O, R, T, E, M, E, A means,*' Leonard hastily broke in. '*I've done it all now, and shan't want to know anything more.*'

"*Sorte mea*" is Latin for "My fate", or "My lot in life". "*Lætus sorte mea*" means "Happy in my lot". It is our family motto. Now, if you ask another question, off you go!—After all, Jane, you must allow it's about as hard lines as could be, to have a few ancestral acres and a nice old place in one of the quietest, quaintest corners of old England; and for Government to come and plant a Camp of Instruction, as they call it, and pour in tribes of savages in war-paint to build wigwams within a couple of miles of your lodge gates!'

She laughed heartily.

'Dear Rupert! You *are* a born poet! You do magnify your woes so grandly. What was the brother-in-law like when you saw him?'

'Oh, the regular type. Hair cut like a pauper, or a convict'—the Master of the House tossed his own locks as he spoke—'big, swaggering sort of fellow, swallowed the poker and not digested it, rather good features, acclimatized complexion, tight fit of hot-red cloth, and general pipeclay.'

'*Then he must be the Sapper!*' Leonard announced as he advanced with a firm step and kindling eyes from the window. 'Jemima's *other* brother is a Gunner. *He* dresses in blue. But they both pipeclay their gloves, and I pipeclayed mine this morning, when she did the hearth. You've no idea how nasty they look whilst it's wet, but they dry as white as snow, only mine fell among the cinders. The Sapper is very kind, both to her and to me. He gave her a brooch, and he is making me a wooden fort to put my cannon in. But the Gunner is such a funny man! I said to him, "Gunner! why do you wear white gloves?" and he said, "Young gentleman, why does a miller wear a white hat?" He's very funny. But I think I like the tidy one best of all. He is so very beautiful, and I should think he must be very brave.'

That Leonard was permitted to deliver himself of this speech without a check can only have been due to the paralysing nature of the shock which it inflicted on his parents, and of which he himself was pleasantly unconscious. His whole soul was in the subject, and he spoke with a certain grace and directness of address, and with a clear and facile enunciation, which were among the child's most conspicuous marks of good breeding.

'This is nice!' said the Master of the House between his teeth, with a deepened scowl.

The air felt stormy, and Leonard began to coax. He laid his curls against his father's arm, and asked, 'Did you ever see a *tidy one*, Father dear? He *is* a very splendid sort of man.'

'What nonsense are you talking? What do you mean by a *tidy one*?'

There was no mistake about the storm now; and Leonard

began to feel helpless, and, as usual in such circumstances, turned to Lady Jane.

'Mother told me!' he gasped.

The Master of the House also turned to Lady Jane.

'Do you mean you have heard of this before?'

She shook her head, and he seized his son by the shoulder.

'If that woman has taught you to tell untruths——'

Lady Jane firmly interposed.

'Leonard never tells untruths, Rupert. Please don't frighten him into doing so. Now, Leonard, don't be foolish and cowardly. Tell Mother quite bravely all about it. Perhaps she has forgotten.'

The child was naturally brave; but the elements of excitement and uncertainty in his upbringing were producing their natural results in a nervous and unequable temperament. It is not the least serious of the evils of being 'spoilt', though perhaps the most seldom recognized. Many a fond parent justly fears to overdo 'lessons' who is surprisingly blind to the brain-fag that comes from the strain to live at grown-up people's level; and to the nervous exhaustion produced in children, no less than in their elders, by indulged restlessness, discontent and craving for fresh excitement, and for want of that sense of power and repose which comes with habitual obedience to righteous rules and regulations. Laws that can be set at naught are among the most demoralizing of influences which can curse a nation; and their effects are hardly less disastrous in the nursery. Moreover an uncertain discipline is apt to take even the spoilt by surprise; and as Leonard seldom fully understood the checks he did receive, they unnerved him. He was unnerved now; and, even with his hand in that of his mother, he stammered over his story with ill-repressed sobs, and much mental confusion.

'W-we met him out walking. I m-mean we were out walking. He was out riding. He looked like a picture in my t-t-tales from Froissart. He had a very curious kind of helmet—n-not quite a helmet, and a beautiful green feather



—at least, n-not exactly a feather, and a beautiful red waistcoat, only n-not a real waistcoat, b-but——’

‘Send him to bed!’ roared the Master of the House. ‘Don’t let him prevaricate any more!’

‘No, Rupert, please! I wish him to try and give a straight account. Now, Leonard, don’t be a baby; but go on and tell the truth, like a brave boy.’

Leonard desperately proceeded, sniffing as he did so.

‘He c-carried a spear, like an old warrior. He truthfully did. On my honour! One end was on the tip of his foot, and there was a flag at the other end—a real fluttering pennon—there truthfully was! He does poke with his spear in battle, I do believe; but he didn’t poke us. He was b-b-beautiful to b-b-behold! I asked Jemima, “Is he another brother, for you do have such very nice brothers!” and she said, “No, he’s——”’

‘*Hang* Jemima!’ said the Master of the House. ‘Now listen to me. You said your mother told you. *What* did she tell you?’

‘Je-Je-Jemima said, “No, he’s a’ Orderly”; and asked the way—I qu-quite forget where to—I truthfully do. And next morning I asked Mother what does Orderly mean? And she said *tidy*. So I call him the tidy one. Dear Mother, you truthfully did—at least,’ added Leonard chivalrously, as Lady Jane’s face gave no response, ‘at least, if you’ve forgotten, never mind: it’s my fault.’

But Lady Jane’s face was blank because she was trying not to laugh. The Master of the House did not try long. He bit his lip, and then burst into a peal.

‘Better say no more to him,’ murmured Lady Jane. ‘I’ll see Jemima now, if he may stay with you.’

He nodded, and throwing himself back on the coach, held out his arms to the child.

‘Well, that’ll do. Put these men out of your head, and let me see your drawing.’

Leonard stretched his faculties, and perceived that the

storm was overpast. He clambered on to his father's knee, and their heads were soon bent lovingly together over the much-smudged sheet of paper, on which the motto from the chimneypiece was irregularly traced.

'You should have copied it from Uncle Rupert's picture. It is in plain letters there.'

Leonard made no reply. His head now lay back on his father's shoulder, and his eyes were fixed on the ceiling, which was of Elizabethan date, with fantastic flowers in raised plaster-work. But Leonard did not see them at that moment. His vision was really turned inwards. Presently he said: 'I am trying to think. Don't interrupt me, Father, if you please.'

The Master of the House smiled, and gazed complacently at the face beside him. No painting, no china in his possession, was more beautiful. Suddenly the boy jumped down and stood alone, with his hands behind his back, and his eyes tightly shut.

'I am thinking very hard, Father. Please tell me again what our motto means.'

'*Lætus sorte mea*—"Happy in my lot". What *are* you puzzling your little brains about?'

'Because I know I know something so like it, and I can't think what! Yes—no! Wait a minute! I've just got it! Yes, I remember now: it was my Wednesday text!'

He opened wide shining eyes, and clapped his hands, and his clear voice rang with the added note of triumph, as he cried: "'The *lot* is fallen unto me in a fair ground. Yea, I have a goodly heritage.'"

The Master of the House held out his arms without speaking; but when Leonard had climbed back into them, he stroked the child's hair slowly, and said: 'Is that your Wednesday text?'

'Last Wednesday's. I learn a text every day. Jemima sets them. She says her grandmother made her learn texts when she was a little girl. Now, Father dear, I'll tell you

what I wish you would do; and I want you to do it at once—this very minute.'

'That is generally the date of your desires. What is it?'

'I don't know what you are talking about, but I know what I want. Now you and I are all alone to our very selves, I want you to come to the organ, and put that text to music like the anthem you made out of those texts Mother chose for you, for the harvest festival. I'll tell you the words, for fear you don't quite remember them, and I'll blow the bellows. You may play on all fours with both your feet and hands; you may pull out trumpet handle; you may make as much noise as ever you like—you'll see how I'll blow!'

Satisfied by the sound of music that the two were happy, Lady Jane was in no haste to go back to the library; but when she did return, Leonard greeted her warmly.

He was pumping at the bellows handle of the chamber organ, before which sat the Master of the House, not a ruffle on his brow, playing with 'all fours', and singing as he played.

Leonard's cheeks were flushed, and he cried impatiently:

'Mother! Mother dear! I've been wanting you ever so long! Father has set my text to music, and I want you to hear it; but I want to sit by him and sing too. So you must come and blow.'

'Nonsense, Leonard! Your mother must do nothing of the sort. Jane! Listen to this!—*In a fa—air grou—nd*. Bit of pure melody, that, eh? The land flowing with milk and honey seems to stretch before one's eyes——'

'No! Father, that *is* unfair. You are not to tell her bits in the middle. Begin at the beginning, and—Mother dear, will you blow, and let me sing?'

'Certainly. Yes, Rupert, please. I've done it before; and my back isn't aching today. Do let me!'

'Yes, do let her,' said Leonard conclusively; and he

swung himself up into the seat beside his father without more ado.

'Now, Father, begin! Mother, listen! And when it comes to "*Yea*", and I pull trumpet handle out, blow as hard as ever you can. This first bit—when he only plays—is very gentle, and quite easy to blow.'

Deep breathing of the organ filled a brief silence, then a prelude stole about the room. Leonard's eyes devoured his father's face, and the Master of the House, looking down on him with the double complacency of father and composer, began to sing:

'The lot—the lot is fallen un-to me'; and, his mouth wide-parted with smiles, Leonard sang also: 'The lot—the lot is fallen—fallen un-to me.'

'In a fa—air grou—nd.'

'Yea!' ('Now, Mother dear, blow! and fancy you hear trumpets!')

'*Yea*! YEA! I have a good-ly her—i—tage!'

And after Lady Jane had ceased to blow, and the musician to make music, Leonard still danced and sang wildly about the room.

'Isn't it splendid, Mother? Father and I made it together out of my Wednesday text. Uncle Rupert, can *you* hear it? I don't think you can. I believe you are dead and deaf, though you seem to see.'

And standing face to face with the young Cavalier, Leonard sang his Wednesday text all through!

'The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground; yea, I have a goodly heritage.'

But Uncle Rupert spoke no word to his young kinsman, though he still 'seemed to see' through eyes drowned in tears.

## Chapter II

‘. . . an acre of barren ground; ling, heath, broom, furze, anything.’  
*Tempest*, Act I. Scene i.

‘Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!  
To all the sensual world proclaim,  
One crowded hour of glorious life  
Is worth an age without a name.’

SCOTT.

TAKE A Highwayman’s Heath.

Destroy every vestige of life with fire and axe, from the pine that has longest been a landmark, to the smallest beetle smothered in smoking moss.

Burn acres of purple and pink heather, and pare away the young bracken that springs verdant from its ashes.

Let flame consume the perfumed gorse in all its glory, and not spare the broom, whose more exquisite yellow atones for its lack of fragrance.

In this common ruin be every lesser flower involved: blue beds of speedwell by the wayfarer’s path—the daintier milkwort, and rougher red rattle—down to the very dodder that clasps the heather, let them perish, and the face of Dame Nature be utterly blackened! Then:

Shave the heath as bare as the back of your hand, and if you have felled every tree, and left not so much as a tussock of grass or a scarlet toadstool to break the force of the winds; then shall the winds come, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall raise on your shaven heath clouds of sand that would not discredit a desert in the heart of Africa.

By some such recipe the ground was prepared for that Camp of Instruction at Asholt, which was, as we have seen, a thorn in the side of at least one of its neighbours. Then a due portion of this sandy oasis in a wilderness of beauty was

mapped out into lines, with military precision, and on these were built rows of little wooden huts, which were painted a neat and useful black.

The huts for married men and officers were of varying degrees of comfort and homeliness, but those for single men were like toy boxes of wooden soldiers; it was only by doing it very tidily that you could (so to speak) put your pretty soldiers away at night when you had done playing with them, and get the lid to shut down.

But then tidiness is a virtue which—like patience—is its own reward. And nineteen men who keep themselves clean and their belongings cleaner; who have made their nineteen beds into easy chairs before most people have got out of bed at all; whose tin pails are kept as bright as average teaspoons (to the envy of housewives and the shame of housemaids!); who establish a common and a holiday side to the reversible top of their one long table, and scrupulously scrub both; who have a place for everything and a discipline which obliges everybody to put everything in its place;—nineteen men, I say, with such habits, find more comfort and elbow room in a hut than an outsider might believe possible, and hang up a photograph or two into the bargain.

But it may be at once conceded to the credit of the Camp, that those who lived there thought better of it than those who did not, and that those who lived there longest were apt to like it best of all.

It was, however, regarded by different people from very opposite points of view, in each of which was some truth.

There were those to whom the place and the life were alike hateful.

They said that, from a soldier's standpoint, the life was one of exceptionally hard work and uncertain stay, with no small proportion of the hardships and even risks of active service, and none of the more glorious chances of war.

That you might die of sunstroke on the march, or contract rheumatism, fever or dysentery under canvas, without

drawing Indian pay and allowances; and that you might ruin your uniform as rapidly as in a campaign, and never hope to pin a ribbon over its inglorious stains.

That the military society was too large to find friends quickly in the neighbourhood, and that as to your neighbours in camp, they were sure to get marching orders just when you had learnt to like them. And if you did *not* like them——! (But, for that matter, quarrelsome neighbours are much the same everywhere. And a boundary road between two estates will furnish as pretty a feud as the pump of a common back yard.)

The haters of the Camp said that it had every characteristic to disqualify it for a home; that it was ugly and crowded without the appliances of civilization; that it was neither town nor country, and had the disadvantages of each without the merits of either.

That it was unshaded and unsheltered, that the lines were monotonous and yet confusing, and every road and parade ground more dusty than another.

That the huts let in the frost in winter and the heat in summer, and were at once stuffy and draughty.

That the low roofs were like a weight upon your head, and that the torture was invariably brought to a climax on the hottest of the dog-days, when they were tarred and sanded in spite of your teeth; a process which did not insure their being watertight or snow-proof when the weather changed.

That the rooms had no cupboards, but an unusual number of doors, through which no tall man could pass without stooping.

That only the publicity and squalor of the back premises of the 'Lines'—their drying clothes, and crumbling mud walls, their coal-boxes and slop-pails—could exceed the depressing effects of the gardens in front, where such plants as were not uprooted by the winds perished of frost or drought, and where, if some gallant creeper had stood fast

and covered the nakedness of your wooden hovel, the Royal Engineers would arrive one morning, with as little announcement as the tar and sand men, and tear down the growth of years before you had finished shaving, for the purpose of repainting your outer walls.

On the other hand, there were those who had a great affection for Asholt, and affection never lacks arguments.

Admitting some hardships and blunders, the defenders of the Camp fell back successfully upon statistics for a witness to the general good health.

They said that if the Camp was windy the breezes were exquisitely bracing, and the climate of that particular part of England such as would qualify it for a health resort for invalids, were it only situated in a comparatively inaccessible part of the Pyrenees, instead of being within an hour or two of London.

That this fact of being within easy reach of town made the Camp practically at the headquarters of civilization and refinement, whilst the simple and sociable ways of living, necessitated by hut life in common, emancipated its select society from rival extravagance and cumbersome formalities.

That the Camp stood on the borders of the two counties of England which rank highest on the books of estate and house agents, and that if you did not think the country lovely and the neighbourhood agreeable you must be hard to please.

That, as regards the Royal Engineers, it was one of your privileges to be hard to please, since you were entitled to their good offices; and if, after all, they sometimes failed to cure disordered drains and smoky chimneys, you, at any rate, did not pay as well as suffer, which is the case in civil life.

That low doors to military quarters might be regarded as a practical joke on the part of authorities, who demand that soldiers shall be both tall and upright, but that man, whether military or not, is an adaptable animal and can get used to



anything; and indeed it was only those officers whose thoughts were more active than their instincts who invariably crushed their best hats before starting for town.

That huts (if only they were a little higher!) had a great many advantages over small houses, which were best appreciated by those who had tried drawing lodging allowance and living in villas, and which would be fully known if ever the Lines were rebuilt in brick.

That on moonlit nights the airs that fanned the silent Camp were as dry and wholesome as by day; that the song of the distant nightingale could be heard there; and finally, that from end to end of this dwelling-place of ten thousand to (on occasion) twenty thousand men, a woman might pass at midnight with greater safety than in the country lanes of a rural village or a police-protected thoroughfare of the metropolis.

But, in truth, the Camp's best defence in the hearts of its defenders was that it was a camp—military life in epitome, with all its defects and all its charm; not the least of which, to some whimsical minds, is, that it represents, as no other phase of society represents, the human pilgrimage in brief.

Here be sudden partings, but frequent reunions; the charities and courtesies of an uncertain life lived largely in common; the hospitality of passing hosts to guests who tarry but a day.

Here surely should be the home of the sage as well as the soldier, where every hut might fitly carry the ancient motto, 'Dwell as if about to Depart', where work bears the nobler name of duty, and where the living, hastening on his business amid 'the hurryings of this life',<sup>1</sup> must pause and stand to salute the dead as he is carried by.

Bare and dusty are the parade grounds, but they are thick with memories. Here were blessed the colours that became a young man's shroud that they might not be a nation's shame. Here march and music welcome the coming and

<sup>1</sup> Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

speed the parting regiments. On this parade the rising sun is greeted with gun-fire and trumpet clarions shriller than the cock, and there he sets to a like salute with tuck of drum. Here the young recruit drills, the warrior puts on his medal, the old pensioner steals back to watch them, and the soldiers' children play—sometimes at fighting or flag-wagging,<sup>1</sup> but oftener at funerals!

<sup>1</sup> 'Flag-wagging', a name among soldiers' children for 'signalling'.

### Chapter III

*'Ut migraturus habita'* ('Dwell as if about to Depart').

*Old House Motto.*

THE Barrack Master's wife was standing in the porch of her hut, the sides of which were of the simplest trelliswork of crossed fir-poles, through which she could watch the proceedings of the gardener without baking herself in the sun. Suddenly she snatched up a green-lined white umbrella, that had seen service in India, and ran out.

'O'Reilly! What *is* that baby doing? There! that white-headed child crossing the parade with a basket in its little arms! It's got nothing on its head. Please go and take it to its mother before it gets sunstroke.'

The gardener was an Irish soldier—an old soldier, as the handkerchief depending from his cap, to protect the nape of his neck from the sun, bore witness. He was a tall man, and stepped without ceremony over the garden paling to get a nearer view of the parade. But he stepped back again at once, and resumed his place in the garden.

'He's Corporal Macdonald's child, madam. The Blind Baby, they call him. Not a bit of harm will he get. They're as hard as nails the whole lot of them. If I was to take him in now, he'd be out before my back was turned. His brothers and sisters are at the school, and Blind Baby's just as happy as the day is long, playing at funerals all the time.'

'Blind! Is he blind? Poor little soul! But he's got a great round potato basket in his arms. Surely they don't make that afflicted infant fetch and carry?'

O'Reilly laughed so heartily that he scandalized his own sense of propriety.

'I ask your pardon, madam. But there's no fear that

Blind Baby'll fetch and carry. Every man in the Lines in his nurse.'

'But what's he doing with that round hamper as big as himself?'

'It's just a make-believe for the Big Drum, madam. The "Dead March" is his whole delight. 'Twas only yesterday I said to his father, "Corporal," I says, "we'll live to see Blind Baby a bandmaster yet," I says; "it's a pure pleasure to see him beat out a tune with his closed fist."

'Will I go and borrow a barrow now, madam?' added O'Reilly, returning to his duties. He was always very willing and never idle, but he liked change of occupation.

'No, no. Don't go away. We shan't want a wheelbarrow till we've finished trenching this border, and picking out the stones. Then you can take them away and fetch the new soil.'

'You're at a deal of pains, madam, and it's a poor patch when all's done to it.'

'I can't live without flowers, O'Reilly, and the Colonel says I may do what I like with this bare strip.'

'Ah! Don't touch the dirty stones with your fingers, madam. I'll have the lot picked in no time at all.'

'You see, O'Reilly, you can't grow flowers in sand unless you can command water, and the Colonel tells me that when it's hot here the water supply runs short, and we mayn't water the garden from the pumps.'

O'Reilly smiled superior.

'The Colonel will get what water he wants, madam. Never fear him! There's ways and means. Look at the gardens of the Royal Engineers' Lines. In the hottest of summer weather they're as green as Old Ireland; and it's not to be supposed that the Royal Engineers can requisition showers from the skies when they need them, more than the the rest of Her Majesty's forces.'

'Perhaps the Royal Engineers do what I mean to do—take more pains than usual; and put in soil that will retain some moisture. One can't make poor land yield anything

without pains, O'Reilly, and this is like the dry bed of a stream—all sand and pebbles.'

'That's as true a word as ever ye spoke, madam, and if it were not that 'twould be taking a liberty, I'd give ye some advice about gardening in Camp. It's not the first time I'm quartered in Asholt, and I know the ways of it.'

'I shall be very glad of advice. You know I have never been stationed here before.'

'Tis an old soldier's advice, madam.'

'So much the better,' said the lady warmly.

O'Reilly was kneeling to his work. He now sat back on his heels, and not without a certain dignity that bade defiance to his surroundings he commenced his oration.

'Please God to spare you and the Colonel, madam, to put in his time as Barrack Master at this station, ye'll see many a regiment come and go, and be making themselves at home all along. And anny one that knows this place, and the nature of the soil, tear-rs would overflow his eyes to see the regiments come for drill, and betake themselves to gardening. Maybe the boys have marched in footsore and fasting, in the hottest of weather, to cold comfort in empty quarters, and they'll not let many hours flit over their heads before some of 'em get possession of a load of green turf, and be laying it down for borders around their huts. It's the young ones I'm speaking of; and there ye'll see them, in the blazing sun, with their shirts open, and not a thing on their heads, squaring and fitting the turfs for bare life, watering them out of old pie-dishes and stable buckets and what not, singing and whistling, and fetching and carrying between the pump and their quarters, just as cheerful as so many birds building their nests in the spring.'

'A very pretty picture, O'Reilly. Why should it bring tears to your eyes? An old soldier like you must know that one would never have a home in quarters at all if one did not begin to make it at once.'

'True for you, madam. Not a doubt of it. But it goes to

your heart to see labour thrown away; and it's not once in a hundred times that grass planted like that will get hold of a soil like this, and the boys themselves at drill all along, or gone out under canvas in Bottomless Bog before the week's over, as likely as not.'

'That would be unlucky. But one must take one's luck as it comes. And you've not told me, now, what you do advise for Camp gardens.'

'That's just what I'm coming to, madam. See the old soldier! What does *he* do? Turns the bucket upside-down outside his hut, and sits on it, with a cap on his head, and a handkerchief down his back, and some tin-tacks, and a ball of string—trust a soldier's eye to get the lines straight—every one of them beginning on the ground and going nearly up to the roof.'

'For creepers, I suppose? What does the old soldier plant?'

'Beans, madam—scarlet runners. These are the things for Asholt. A few beans are nothing in your baggage. They like a warm place, and when they're on the sunny side of a hut they've got it, and no mistake. They're growing while you're on duty. The flowers are the right soldier's colour; and when it comes to the beans, ye may put your hand out of the window and gather them, and no trouble at all.'

'The old soldier is very wise; but I think I must have more flowers than that. So I plant, and if they die I am very sorry; and if they live, and other people have them, I try to be glad. One ought to learn to be unselfish, O'Reilly, and think of one's successors.'

'And that's true, madam; barring that I never knew anyone's successor to have the same fancies as himself: one plants trees to give shelter, and the next cuts them down to let in the air.'

'Well, I suppose the only way is to be prepared for the worst. The rose we planted yesterday by the porch is a great favourite of mine; but the Colonel calls it "Marching

Orders". It used to grow over my window in my old home, and I have planted it by every home I have had since; but the Colonel says whenever it settled and began to flower the regiment got the route.'

'The Colonel must name it again, madam,' said O'Reilly gallantly, as he hitched up the knees of his trousers and returned to the border. 'It shall be "Standing Orders" now, if soap and water can make it blossom, and I'm spared to attend to it all the time. Many a hundred roses may you and the Colonel pluck from it, and never one with a thorn!'

'Thank you, O'Reilly; thank you very much. Soapy water is very good for roses, I believe?'

'It is so, madam. I put in a good deal of my time as officer's servant after I was in the Connaught Rangers, and the Captain I was with one time was as fond of flowers as yourself. There was a mighty fine rose-bush by his quarters, and every morning I had to carry out his bath to it. He used more soap than most gentlemen, and when he sent me to the town for it—"It's not for myself, O'Reilly," he'd say, "so much as for the rose. Bring large tablets," he'd say, "and the best scented ye can get. The roses 'll be the sweeter for it." That was his way of joking, and never a smile on his face. He was odd in many of his ways, was the Captain, but he was a grand soldier entirely; a good officer, and a good friend to his men, and to the wives and children no less. The regiment was in India when he died of cholera, in twenty-four hours, do what I would. "Oh, the cramp in my legs, O'Reilly!" he says. "God bless ye, Captain," says I; "never mind your legs; I'd manage the cramp, sir," I says, "if I could but keep your heart up." "Ye'll not do that, O'Reilly," he says, "for all your goodness; I lost it too long ago." That was his way of joking, and never a smile on his face. 'Twas a pestilential hole we were in, and that's the truth; and cost Her Majesty more in lives than would have built healthy quarters, and given us every comfort; but the flowers throve there if we didn't, and the Captain's grave was filled till ye

couldn't get the sight of him for roses. He was a good officer, and beloved of his men; and better master never a man had!'

As he ceased speaking, O'Reilly drew his sleeve sharply across his eyes, and then bent again to his work, which was why he failed to see what the Barrack Master's wife saw, and did not for some moments discover that she was no longer in the garden. The matter was this:

The Barrack Master's quarters were close to the Iron Church, and the straight road that ran past both was crossed, just beyond the church, by another straight road, which finally led out to and joined a country highway. From this highway an open carriage and pair were being driven into the camp as a soldier's funeral was marching to church. The band frightened the horses, who were got past with some difficulty, and having turned the sharp corner, were coming rapidly towards the Barrack Master's hut when Blind Baby, excited by the band, strayed from his parade ground, tumbled, basket and all, into the ditch that divided it from the road, picked up himself and his basket, and was sturdily setting forth across the road just as the frightened horses came plunging to the spot.

The Barrack Master's wife was not very young, and not very slender. Rapid movements were not easy to her. She was nervous also, and could never afterwards remember what she did with herself in those brief moments before she became conscious that the footman had got to the horses' heads, and that she herself was almost under their feet, with Blind Baby in her arms. Blind Baby himself recalled her to consciousness by the ungrateful fashion in which he pummelled his deliverer with his fists and howled for his basket, which had rolled under the carriage to add to the confusion. Nor was he to be pacified till O'Reilly took him from her arms.

By this time men had rushed from every hut and kitchen, wash-place and shop, and were swarming to the rescue; and through the whole disturbance, like minute-guns, came the



short barks of a black puppy, which Leonard had insisted upon taking with him to show to his aunt, despite the protestations of his mother: for it was Lady Jane's carriage, and this was how the sisters met.

They had been sitting together for some time, so absorbed by the strangeness and the pleasure of their new relations that Leonard and his puppy had slipped away unobserved, when Lady Jane, who was near the window, called to her sister-in-law: 'Adelaide, tell me, my dear, is this Colonel Jones?' She spoke with some trepidation. It is so easy for those unacquainted with uniforms to make strange blunders. Moreover the Barrack Master, though soldierly looking, was so, despite a very unsoldierly defect. He was exceedingly stout, and as he approached the miniature garden gate, Lady Jane found herself gazing with some anxiety to see if he could possibly get through.

But O'Reilly did not make an empty boast when he said that a soldier's eye was true. The Colonel came quite neatly through the toy entrance, knocked nothing down in the porch, bent and bared his head with one gesture as he passed under the drawing-room doorway, and, bowing again to Lady Jane, moved straight to the side of his wife.

Something in the action—a mixture of dignity and devotion, with just a touch of defiance—went to Lady Jane's heart. She went up to him and held out both her hands: 'Please shake hands with me, Colonel Jones. I am so very happy to have found a sister!' In a moment more she turned round, saying: 'I must show you your nephew. Leonard!' But Leonard was not there.

'I fancy I have seen him already,' said the Colonel. 'If he is a very beautiful boy, very beautifully dressed in velvet, he's with O'Reilly, watching the funeral.'

Lady Jane looked horrified, and Mrs Jones looked much relieved.

'He's quite safe if he's with O'Reilly. But give me my

sunshade, Henry, please; I dare say Lady Jane would like to see the funeral too.'

It is an Asholt amenity to take care that you miss no opportunity of seeing a funeral. It would not have occurred to Lady Jane to wish to go, but as her only child had gone she went willingly to look for him. As they turned the corner of the hut they came straight upon it, and at that moment the 'Dead March' broke forth afresh.

The drum beat out those familiar notes which strike upon the heart rather than the ear, the brass screamed, the ground trembled to the tramp of feet and the lumbering of the gun-carriage, and Lady Jane's eyes filled suddenly with tears at the sight of the dead man's accoutrements lying on the Union Jack that serves a soldier for a pall. As she dried them she saw Leonard.

Drawn up in accurate line with the edge of the road, O'Reilly was standing to salute; and as near to the Irish private as he could squeeze himself stood the boy, his whole body stretched to the closest possible imitation of his new and deeply revered friend, his left arm glued to his side, and the back of his little right hand laid against his brow, gazing at the pathetic pageant as it passed him with devouring eyes. And behind them stood Blind Baby, beating upon his basket.

For the basket had been recovered, and Blind Baby's equanimity also; and he wandered up and down the parade again in the sun, long after the soldier's funeral had wailed its way to the graveyard, over the heather-covered hill.

## Chapter IV

'My mind is in the anomalous condition of hating war, and loving its discipline, which has been an incalculable contribution to the sentiment of duty . . . the devotion of the common soldier to his leader (the sign for him of hard duty) is the type of all higher devotedness, and is full of promise to other and better generations.' GEORGE ELIOT.

'YOUR SISTER is as nice as nice can be, Rupert; and I like the Barrack Master very much too. He *is* stout! But he is very active and upright, and his manners to his wife are wonderfully pretty. Do you know, there is something to me most touching in the way these two have knocked about the world together, and seem so happy with so little. Cottagers could hardly live more simply, and yet their ideas, or at any rate their experiences, seem so much larger than one's own.'

'My dear Jane! if you've taken them up from the romantic point of view all is indeed accomplished. I know the wealth of your imagination, and the riches of its charity. If, in such a mood, you will admit that Jones is stout, he must be fat indeed! Never again upbraid me with the price that I paid for that Chippendale armchair. It will hold the Barrack Master.'

'Rupert!—I cannot help saying it—it ought to have held him long ago. It makes me miserable to think that they have never been under our roof.'

'Jane! be miserable if you must; but at least be accurate. The Barrack Master was in India when I bought that paragon of all Chips, and he has only come home this year. Nay, my dear! don't be vexed. I give you my word, I'm a good deal more ashamed than I like to own to think how Adelaide has been treated by the family—with me as its head. Did you make my apologies today, and tell her that I shall ride out tomorrow and pay my respects to her and Jones?'

'Of course. I told her you were obliged to go to town, and I would not delay to call and ask if I could be of use to them. I begged them to come here till their quarters are quite finished; but they won't. They say they are settled. I could not say much, because we ought to have asked them sooner. He is rather on his dignity with us, I think, and no wonder.'

'He's disgustingly on his dignity! They both are. Because the family resented the match at first, they have refused every kind of help that one would have been glad to give him as Adelaide's husband, if only to secure their being in a decent position. Neither interest nor money would he accept, and Adelaide has followed his lead. She has very little of her own unfortunately; and she knows how my father left things as well as I do, and never would accept a farthing more than her bare rights. I tried some dodges, through Quills; but it was of no use. The vexation is that he has taken this post of Barrack Master as a sort of pension, which need never have been. I suppose they have to make that son an allowance. It's not likely he lives on his pay. I can't conceive how they scrub along.'

And as the Master of the House threw himself into the paragon of all Chips, he ran his fingers through hair, the length and disorder of which would have made the Barrack Master feel positively ill, with a gesture of truly dramatic despair.

'Your sister has made her room look wonderfully pretty. One would never imagine those huts could look as nice as they do inside. But it's like playing with a doll's house. One feels inclined to examine everything, and to be quite pleased that the windows have glass in them, and will really open and shut.'

The Master of the House raised his eyebrows funnily.

'You did take rose-coloured spectacles with you to the Camp!'

Lady Jane laughed.

'I did not see the Camp itself through them. What an

incomparably dreary place it is! It makes me think of little woodcuts in missionary reports—"Sketch of a Native Settlement"—rows of little black huts that look, at a distance, as if one must creep into them on all fours; nobody about, and an iron church on the hill.'

'Most accurately described! And you wonder that I regret that a native settlement should have been removed from the enchanting distance of missionary reports to become my permanent neighbour?'

'Well, I must confess the effect it produces on me is to make me feel quite ashamed of the peace and pleasure of this dear old place, the shade and greenery outside, the space above my head, and the lovely things before my eyes inside (for you know, Rupert, how I appreciate your decorative tastes, though I have so few myself. I only scolded about the Chip because I think you might have got him for less)—when so many men bred to similar comforts, and who have served their country so well, with wives I dare say quite as delicate as I am, have to be cooped up in those ugly little kennels in that dreary place——'

'What an uncomfortable thing a Scotch conscience is!' interrupted the Master of the House. 'By the by, those religious instincts, which are also characteristic of your race, must have found one redeeming feature in the Camp, the "iron church on the hill"; especially as I imagine that it is puritanically ugly!'

'There was a funeral going into it as we drove into Camp, and I wanted to tell you the horses were very much frightened.'

'Richards fidgets those horses; they're quiet enough with me.'

'They did not like the military band.'

'They must get used to the band and to other military nuisances. It is written in the stars, as I too clearly foresee, that we shall be driving in and out of that Camp three days a week. I can't go to my club without meeting men I was at

school with who are stationed at Asholt, and expect me to look them up. As to the women, I met a man yesterday who is living in a hut, and expects a Dowager Countess and her two daughters for the ball. He has given up his dressing-room to the Dowager, and put two barrack beds into the coal-hole for the young ladies, he says. It's an insanity!

'Adelaide told me about the ball. The Camp seems very gay just now. They have had theatricals; and there is to be a grand Field Day this week.'

'So our visitors have already informed me. They expect to go. Louisa Mainwaring is looking handsomer than ever, and I have always regarded her as a girl with a mind. I took her to see the peep I have cut opposite to the island, and I could not imagine why those fine eyes of hers looked so blank. Presently she said: "I suppose you can see the Camp from the little pine-wood?" And to the little pine-wood we had to go. Both the girls have got stiff necks craning out of the carriage window to catch sight of the white tents among the heather as they came along in the train.'

'I suppose we must take them to the Field Day; but I am very nervous about those horses, Rupert.'

'The horses will be taken out before any firing begins. As to bands, the poor creatures must learn, like their master, to endure the brazen liveliness of military music. It's no fault of mine that our nerves are scarified by any sounds less soothing than the crooning of the wood-pigeons among the pines!'

No one looked forward to the big Field Day with keener interest than Leonard; and only a few privileged persons knew more about the arrangements for the day than he had contrived to learn.

O'Reilly was sent over with a note from Mrs Jones to decline the offer of a seat in Lady Jane's carriage for the occasion. She was not very well. Leonard waylaid the messenger (whom he hardly recognized as a tidy one!), and O'Reilly gladly imparted all that he knew about the Field

Day: and this was a good deal. He had it from a friend—a corporal in the Headquarters Office.

As a rule Leonard only enjoyed a limited popularity with his mother's visitors. He was very pretty and very amusing, and had better qualities even than these; but he was restless and troublesome. On this occasion, however, the young ladies suffered him to trample their dresses and interrupt their conversation without remonstrance. He knew more about the Field Day than anyone in the house, and, standing among their pretty furbelows and fancywork in stiff military attitudes, he imparted his news with an unsuccessful imitation of an Irish accent.

'O'Reilly says the March Past'll be at eleven o'clock on the Sandy Slopes.'

'Louisa, is that Major O'Reilly of the Rifles?'

'I don't know, dear. Is your friend O'Reilly in the Rifles, Leonard?'

'I don't know. I know he's an owld soldier—he told me so.'

'Old, Leonard; not owld. You mustn't talk like that.'

'I shall if I like. *He* does, and I mean to.'

'I dare say he did, Louisa. He's always joking.'

'No he isn't. He didn't joke when the funeral went past. He looked quite grave, as if he was saying his prayers, and stood *so*.'

'How touching!'

'How like him!'

'How graceful and tender-hearted Irishmen are!'

'I stood so too. I mean to do as like him as ever I can. I do love him so very very much!'

'Dear boy!'

'You good, affectionate little soul!'

'Give me a kiss, Leonard dear.'

'No, thank you. I'm too old for kissing. He's going to march past, and he's going to look out for me with the tail of his eye, and I'm going to look out for him.'

'Do, Leonard; and mind you tell us when you see him coming.'

'I can't promise. I might forget. But perhaps you can know him by the good-conduct stripe on his arm. He used to have two; but he lost one all along of St Patrick's Day.'

'That *can't* be your partner, Louisa!'

'Officers *never* have good-conduct stripes.'

'Leonard, you ought not to talk to common soldiers. You've got a regular Irish brogue, and you're learning all sorts of Irish words. You'll grow up quite a vulgar little boy, if you don't take care.'

'I don't want to take care. I like being Irish, and I shall be a vulgar little boy too if I choose. But when I do grow up I am going to grow into an owld, owld, Owld Soldier!'

Leonard made this statement of his intentions in his clearest manner. After which, having learned that the favour of the fair is fickleness, he left the ladies and went to look for his Black Puppy.

The Master of the House, in arranging for his visitors to go to the Field Day, had said that Leonard was not to be of the party. He had no wish to encourage the child's fancy for soldiers: and as Leonard was invariably restless out driving, and had a trick of kicking people's shins in his changes of mood and position, he was a most uncomfortable element in a carriage full of ladies. But it is needless to say that he stoutly resisted his father's decree; and the child's disappointment was so bitter, and he howled and wept himself into such a deplorable condition, that the young ladies sacrificed their own comfort and the crispness of their new dresses to his grief, and petitioned the Master of the House that he might be allowed to go.

The Master of the House gave in. He was accustomed to yield where Leonard was concerned. But the concession proved only a prelude to another struggle. Leonard wanted the Black Puppy to go too.

On this point the young ladies presented no petition.



Leonard's boots they had resolved to endure, but not the dog's paws. Lady Jane, too, protested against the puppy, and the matter seemed settled; but at the last moment, when all but Leonard were in the carriage, and the horses chafing to be off, the child made his appearance, and stood on the entrance steps with his puppy in his arms, and announced, in dignified sorrow, 'I really cannot go if my Sweep has to be left behind.'

With one consent the grown-up people turned to look at him.

Even the intoxicating delight that colour gives can hardly exceed the satisfying pleasure in which beautiful proportions steep the sense of sight; and one is often at fault to find the law that has been so exquisitely fulfilled, when the eye has no doubt of its own satisfaction.

The shallow stone steps, on the top of which Leonard stood, and the old doorway that framed him, had this mysterious grace, and, truth to say, the boy's beauty was a jewel not unworthy of its setting.

A holiday dress of crimson velvet, with collar and ruffles of old lace, became him very quaintly; and as he laid a cheek like a rose-leaf against the sooty head of his pet, and they both gazed piteously at the carriage, even Lady Jane's conscience was stifled by motherly pride. He was her only child, but, as he had said of the Orderly, 'a very splendid sort of one'.

The Master of the House stamped his foot with an impatience that was partly real and partly perhaps affected.

'Well, get in somehow, if you mean to. The horses can't wait all day for you.'

No ruby-throated humming-bird could have darted more swiftly from one point to another than Leonard from the old grey steps into the carriage. Little boys can be very careful when they choose, and he trod on no toes and crumpled no finery in his flitting.

To those who know dogs, it is needless to say that the

puppy showed an even superior discretion. It bore throttling without a struggle. Instinctively conscious of the alternative of being shut up in a stable for the day, and left there to bark its heart out, it shrank patiently into Leonard's grasp, and betrayed no sign of life except in the strained and pleading anxiety which a puppy's eyes so often wear.

'Your dog is a very good dog, Leonard, I must say,' said Louisa Mainwaring; 'but he's very ugly. I never saw such legs!'

Leonard tucked the lank black legs under his velvet and ruffles. 'Oh, he's all right,' said he. 'He'll be very handsome soon. It's his ugly mouth.'

'I wonder you didn't insist on our bringing Uncle Rupert and *his* dog to complete the party,' said the Master of the House.

The notion tickled Leonard, and he laughed so heartily that the puppy's legs got loose, and required to be tucked in afresh. Then both remained quiet for several seconds, during which the puppy looked as anxious as ever; but Leonard's face wore a smile of dreamy content that doubled its loveliness.

But as the carriage passed the windows of the library a sudden thought struck him, and dispersed his repose.

Gripping his puppy firmly under his arm, he sprang to his feet—regardless of other people's—and waving his cap and feather above his head he cried aloud: 'Goodbye, Uncle Rupert! Can you hear me? Uncle Rupert, I say! I am—*lætus—sorte—mea!*'

All the Camp was astir.

Men and bugles awoke with the dawn and the birds, and now the women and children of all ranks were on the alert. (Nowhere does so large and enthusiastic a crowd collect 'to see the pretty soldiers go by' as in those places where pretty soldiers live.)

Soon after gun-fire O'Reilly made his way from his own quarters to those of the Barrack Master, opened the back door by some process best known to himself, and had been busy for half an hour in the drawing-room before his proceedings woke the Colonel. They had been as noiseless as possible; but the Colonel's dressing-room opened into the drawing-room, his bedroom opened into that, and all the doors and windows were open to court the air.

'Who's there?' said the Colonel from his pillow.

'Tis O'Reilly, sir. I ask your pardon, sir; but I heard that the mistress was not well. She'll be apt to want the reclining chair, sir; and 'twas damaged in the unpacking. I got the screws last night, but I was busy soldiering<sup>1</sup> till too late; so I come in this morning, for Smith's no good at a job of the kind at all. He's a butcher to his trade.'

'Mrs Jones is much obliged to you for thinking of it, O'Reilly.'

'Tis an honour to oblige her, sir. I done it sound and secure. 'Tis as safe as a rock; but I'd like to nail a bit of canvas on from the porch to the other side of the hut, for shelter, in case she'd be sitting out to taste the air and see the troops go by. 'Twill not take me five minutes, if the hammering wouldn't be too much for the mistress. 'Tis a hot day, sir, for certain, till the gun bring the rain down.'

'Put it up, if you've time.'

'I will, sir. I left your sword and gloves on the kitchen table, sir; and I told Smith to water the rose before the sun's on to it.'

With which O'Reilly adjusted the cushions of the invalid chair, and having nailed up the bit of canvas outside, so as to form an impromptu veranda, he ran back to his quarters to put himself into marching order for the Field Day.

The Field Day broke into smiles of sunshine too early to be lasting. By breakfast time the rain came down without waiting for the guns; but those most concerned took the

<sup>1</sup> 'Soldiering', a barrack term, for the furbishing up of accoutrements, etc.

change of weather cheerfully, as soldiers should. Rain damages uniforms, but it lays dust; and the dust of the Sandy Slopes was dust indeed!

After a pelting shower the sun broke forth again, and from that time onwards the weather was 'Queen's Weather', and Asholt was at its best. The sandy Camp lay girdled by a zone of the verdure of early summer, which passed by miles of distance, through exquisite gradations of many blues, to meet the soft threatenings of the changeable sky. Those lowering and yet tender rain clouds which hover over the British Isles, guardian spirits of that scantily recognized blessing—a temperate climate; Naiads of the waters over the earth, whose caprices betwixt storm and sunshine fling such beauty upon a landscape as has no parallel except in the common simile of a fair face quivering between tears and smiles.

Smiles were in the ascendant as the regiments began to leave their parade grounds, and the surface of the Camp (usually quiet, even to dullness) sparkled with movement. Along every principal road the colour and glitter of marching troops rippled like streams, and as the band of one regiment died away another broke upon the excited ear.

At the outlets of the Camp eager crowds waited patiently in the dusty hedges to greet favourite regiments, or watch for personal friends amongst the troops; and on the ways to the Sandy Slopes every kind of vehicle, from a drag to a donkey cart, and every variety of pedestrian, from an energetic tourist carrying a field-glass to a more admirably energetic mother carrying a baby, disputed the highway with cavalry in brazen breastplates, and horse artillery whose gallant show was drowned in its own dust.

Lady Jane's visitors had expressed themselves as anxious not to miss anything, and troops were still pouring out of the Camp when the Master of the House brought his skittish horses to where a 'block' had just occurred at the turn to the Sandy Slopes.

What the shins and toes of the visitors endured whilst that knot of troops of all arms disentangled itself and streamed away in gay and glittering lines, could only have been concealed by the supreme powers of endurance latent in the weaker sex; for with the sight of every fresh regiment Leonard changed his plans for his own future career, and with every change he forgot a fresh promise to keep quiet, and took by storm that corner of the carriage which for the moment offered the best point of view.

Suddenly, through the noise and dust, and above the dying away of conflicting bands into the distance, there came another sound—a sound unlike any other—the skirling of the pipes; and Lady Jane sprang up and put her arms about her son, and bade him watch for the Highlanders, and if Cousin Alan looked up as he went past, to cry ‘Hurrah for Bonnie Scotland!’

For this sound and this sight—the bagpipes and the Highlanders—a sandy-faced Scotch lad on the tramp to Southampton had waited for an hour past, frowning and freckling his face in the sun, and exasperating a naturally dour temper by reflecting on the probable pride and heartlessness of folk who wore such soft complexions and pretty clothes as the ladies and the little boy in the carriage on the other side of the road.

But when the skirling of the pipes cleft the air his cold eyes softened as he caught sight of Leonard’s face, and the echo that he made to Leonard’s cheer was caught up by the good-humoured crowd, who gave the Scotch regiment a willing ovation as it swung proudly by. After which the carriage moved on, and for a time Leonard sat very still. He was thinking of Cousin Alan and his comrades; of the tossing plumes that shaded their fierce eyes; of the swing of kilt and sporran with their unfettered limbs; of the rhythmic tread of their white feet and the fluttering ribbons on the bagpipes; and of Alan’s handsome face looking out of his most becoming bravery.

The result of his meditations Leonard announced with his usual lucidity:

'I am Scotch, not Irish, though O'Reilly *is* the nicest man I ever knew. But I must tell him that I really cannot grow up into an Owld Soldier, because I mean to be a young Highland officer, and look at ladies with my eyes like *this*—and carry my sword *so*!'

## Chapter V

'O, that a man might know the end of this day's business, ere it come!'  
*Julius Cæsar.*

**Y**EARS OF living amongst soldiers had increased, rather than diminished, Mrs Jones's relish for the sights and sounds of military life.

The charm of novelty is proverbially great, but it is not so powerful as that peculiar spell which drew the retired tallow-chandler back to 'shop' on melting days, and which guided the choice of the sexton of a cemetery who only took one holiday trip in the course of seven years, and then he went to a cemetery at some distance to see how they managed matters there. And indeed poor humanity may be very thankful for the infatuation, since it goes far to make life pleasant in the living to plain folk who do not make a point of being discontented.

In obedience to this law of nature, the Barrack Master's wife did exactly what O'Reilly had expected her to do. As she could not drive to the Field Day, she strolled out to see the troops go by. Then the vigour derived from breakfast and the freshness of the morning air began to fail, the day grew hotter, the Camp looked dreary and deserted, and, either from physical weakness or from some untold cause, a nameless anxiety, a sense of trouble in the air, began to oppress her.

Wandering out again to try and shake it off, it was almost a relief, like the solving of a riddle, to find Blind Baby sitting upon his Big Drum, too low-spirited to play the 'Dead March', and crying because all the bands had 'gone right away'. Mrs Jones made friends with him, and led him off to her hut for consolation, and he was soon as

happy as ever, standing by the piano and beating upon his basket in time to the tunes she played for him. But the day and the hut grew hotter, and her back ached, and the nameless anxiety reasserted itself, and was not relieved by Blind Baby's preference for the 'Dead March' over every other tune with which she tried to beguile him.

And when he had gone back to his own parade, with a large piece of cake and many assurances that the bands would undoubtedly return, and the day wore on, and the hut became like an oven (in the absence of any appliances to mitigate the heat), the Barrack Master's wife came to the hasty conclusion that Asholt was hotter than India, whatever thermometers might say; and, too weary to seek for breezes outside, or to find a restful angle of the reclining chair inside, she folded her hands in her lap and abandoned herself to the most universal remedy for most ills—patience. And patience was its own reward, for she fell asleep.

Her last thoughts as she dozed off were of her husband and son, wishing that they were safe home again, that she might assure herself that it was not on their account that there was trouble in the air. Then she dreamed of being roused by the Colonel's voice saying, 'I have bad news to tell you——' and was really awakened by straining in her dream to discover what hindered him from completing his sentence.

She had slept some time—it was now afternoon, and the air was full of sounds of the returning bands. She went out into the road and saw the Barrack Master (he was easy to distinguish at some distance!) pause on his homeward way, and then she saw her son running to join his father, with his sword under his arm; and they came on together, talking as they came.

And as soon as they got within earshot she said: 'Have you bad news to tell me?'

The Colonel ran up and drew her hand within his arm. 'Come indoors, dear Love.'



'You are both well?'

'Both of us. Brutally so.'

'Quite well, dear Mother.'

Her son was taking her other hand into caressing care; there could be no doubt about the bad news.

'Please tell me what it is.'

'There has been an accident——'

'To whom?'

'To your brother's child; that jolly little chap——'

'Oh, Henry! How?'

'He was standing up in the carriage, I believe, with a dog in his arms. George saw him when he went past—didn't you?'

'Yes. I wonder he didn't fall then. I fancy someone had told him it was our regiment. The dog was struggling, but he would take off his hat to us——'

The young soldier choked, and added, with difficulty, 'I think I never saw so lovely a face. Poor little cousin!'

'And he overbalanced himself?'

'Not when George saw him. I believe it was when the horse artillery were going by at the gallop. They say he got so much excited, and the dog barked, and they both fell. Some say there were people moving a drag, and some that he fell under the horse of a patrol. Anyhow, I'm afraid he's very much hurt. They took him straight home in an ambulance wagon to save time. Erskine went with him. I sent off a telegram for them for a swell surgeon from town, and Lady Jane promised a line if I send over this evening. O'Reilly must go after dinner and wait for the news.'

O'Reilly, sitting stiffly amid the coming and going of the servants at the Hall, was too deeply devoured by anxiety to trouble himself as to whether the footman's survey of his uniform bespoke more interest or contempt. But when—just after gun-fire had sounded from the distant camp—Jemima brought him the long waited for note, he caught the girl's hand, and held it for some moments before he was

able to say: 'Just tell me, miss; is it good news or bad that I'll be carrying back in this bit of paper?' And as Jemima only answered by sobs, he added, almost impatiently: 'Will he live, dear? Nod your head if ye can do no more.'

Jemima nodded, and the soldier dropped her hand, drew a long breath, and gave himself one of those shakes with which an Irishman so often throws off care.

'Ah, then, dry your eyes, darlin'; while there's life there's hope.'

But Jemima sobbed still.

'The doctor—from London—says he may live a good while, but—but—he's to be a cripple all his days!'

'Now wouldn't I rather be meeting a tiger this evening than see the mistress's face when she gets that news!'

And O'Reilly strode back to Camp.

Going along through a shady part of the road in the dusk, seeing nothing but the red glow of the pipe with which he was consoling himself, the soldier stumbled against a lad sleeping on the grass by the roadside. It was the tramping Scotchman, and as he sprang to his feet the two Celts broke into a fiery dialogue that seemed as if it could only come to blows.

It did not. It came to the good-natured soldier's filling the wayfarer's pipe for him.

'Much good may it do ye! And maybe the next time a decent man that's hastening home on the wings of misfortune stumbles against ye, ye'll not be so apt to take offence.'

'I ask your pardon, man; I was barely wakened, and I took ye for one of those gay red-coats blustering hame after a bloodless battle on the Field Day, as they ca' it.'

'Bad luck to the Field Day! A darker never dawned; and wouldn't a bloodier battle have spared a child?'

'Your child? What's happened to the bairn?'

'My child indeed! And his mother a lady of title, no less.'

'What's got him?'

'Fell out of the carriage, and was trampled into a cripple for all the days of his life. He that had set as fine a heart as ever beat on being a soldier; and a grand one he'd have made . "Sure 'tis a nobleman ye'll be," said I. "'Tis an owld soldier I mean to be, O'Reilly," says he. And——'

'Fond of the soldiers—his mother a leddy? Man! had he a braw new velvet coat and the face of an angel on him?'

'He had so.'

'And I that thocht they'd all this warld could offer them! A cripple? Ech, sirs!'

## *Chapter VI*

'I will do it . . . for I am weak by nature, and very timorous, unless where a strong sense of duty holdeth and supporteth me. There God acteth, and not His creature.' *LADY JANE GREY.*

**L** EONARD WAS to some extent a spoiled child. But it demands a great deal of unselfish foresight, and of self-discipline, to do more for a beautiful and loving pet than play with it.

And if his grace and beauty and high spirits had been strong temptations to give him everything he desired, and his own way above all, how much greater were the excuses for indulging every whim when the radiant loveliness of health had faded to the wan wistfulness of pain, when the young limbs bounded no more, and when his boyish hopes and hereditary ambitions were cut off by the shears of a destiny that seemed drearier than death?

As soon as the poor child was able to be moved his parents took a place on the west coast of Scotland, and carried him thither.

The neighbourhood of Asholt had become intolerable by them for some time to come, and a soft climate and sea-breezes were recommended for his general health.

Jemima's dismissal was revoked. Leonard flatly, and indeed furiously, refused to have any other nurse. During the first crisis a skilled hospital nurse was engaged, but from the time that he fully recovered consciousness he would receive help from no hands but those of Jemima and Lady Jane.

Far older and wiser patients than he become ruthless in their demands upon the time and strength of those about them; and Leonard did not spare his willing slaves by night or by day. It increased their difficulties and his sufferings

that the poor child was absolutely unaccustomed to prompt obedience, and disputed the doctor's orders as he had been accustomed to dispute all others.

Lady Jane's health became very much broken, but Jemima was fortunately possessed of a sturdy body and an inactive mind, and with a devotion little less than maternal she gave up both to Leonard's service.

He had a third slave of his bed-chamber—a black one—the Black Puppy, from whom he had resolutely refused to part, and whom he insisted upon having upon his bed, to the doctor's disgust. When months passed, and the Black Puppy became a Black Dog, large and cumbersome, another effort was made to induce Leonard to part with him at night; but he only complained bitterly.

'It is very odd that there cannot be a bed big enough for me and my dog. I am an invalid, and I ought to have what I want.'

So The Sweep remained as his bedfellow.

The Sweep also played the part of the last straw in the drama of Jemima's life; for Leonard would allow no one but his own dear nurse to wash his own dear dog; and odd hours, in which Jemima might have snatched a little rest and relaxation, were spent by her in getting the big dog's still lanky legs into a tub, and keeping him there, and washing him, and drying and combing him into fit condition to spring back on to Leonard's coverlet when that imperious little invalid called for him.

It was a touching manifestation of the dog's intelligence that he learned with the utmost care to avoid jostling or hurting the poor suffering little body of his master.

Leonard's fourth slave was his father.

But the Master of the House had no faculty for nursing, and was by no means possessed of the patience needed to persuade Leonard for his good. So he could only be with the child when he was fit to be read or played to, and later on, when he was able to be out of doors. And at times he went

away out of sight of his son's sufferings, and tried to stifle the remembrance of a calamity and disappointment whose bitterness his own heart alone fully knew.

After the lapse of nearly two years Leonard suddenly asked to be taken home. He was tired of the shore, and wanted to see if The Sweep remembered the park. He wanted to see if Uncle Rupert would look surprised to see him going about in a wheel-chair. He wanted to go to the Camp again, now the doctor said he might have drives, and see if O'Reilly was alive still, and his uncle, and his aunt, and his cousin. He wanted Father to play to him on their own organ, their very own organ, and—no, thank you!—he did not want any other music now.

He hated this nasty place, and wanted to go home. If he was going to live he wanted to live there, and if he was going to die he wanted to die there, and have his funeral his own way, if they knew a General and could borrow a gun-carriage and a band.

He didn't want to eat or to drink, or to go to sleep, or to take his medicine, or to go out and send The Sweep into the sea, or to be read to or played to; he wanted to go home—home—home!

The upshot of which was that, before his parents had time to put into words the idea that the agonizing associations of Asholt were still quite unendurable, they found themselves congratulating each other on having got Leonard safely home before he had cried himself into convulsions over twenty-four hours' delay.

For a time, being at home seemed to revive him. He was in less pain, in better spirits, had more appetite, and was out a great deal with his dog and his nurse. But he fatigued himself, which made him fretful, and he certainly grew more imperious every day.

His whim was to be wheeled into every nook and corner of the place, inside and out, and to show them to The Sweep. And who could have had the heart to refuse him anything

in the face of that dread affliction which had so changed him amid the unchanged surroundings of his old home?

Jemima led the life of a prisoner on the treadmill. When she wasn't pushing him about she was going errands for him, fetching and carrying. She was 'never off her feet'.

He moved about a little now on crutches, though he had not strength to be very active with them, as some cripples are. But they became ready instruments of his impatience to thump the floor with one end, and not infrequently to strike those who offended him with the other.

His face was little less beautiful than of old, but it looked wan and weird; and his beauty was often marred by what is more destructive of beauty even than sickness—the pinched lines of peevishness and ill temper. He suffered less, but he looked more unhappy, was more difficult to please, and more impatient with all efforts to please him. But then, though nothing is truer than that patience is its own reward, it has to be learned first. And, with children, what has to be learned must be taught.

To this point Lady Jane's meditations brought her one day as she paced up and down her own morning-room, and stood before the window which looked down where the elm trees made long shadows on the grass; for the sun was declining, greatly to Jemima's relief; who had been toiling in Leonard's service through the hottest hours of a summer day.

Lady Jane had a tender conscience, and just now it was a very uneasy one. She was one of those somewhat rare souls who are by nature absolutely true. Not so much with elaborate avoidance of lying, or an aggressive candour, as straight-minded, single-eyed, clear-headed and pure-hearted; a soul to which the truth and reality of things, and the facing of things, came as naturally as the sham of them and the blinking of them comes to others.

When such a nature has strong affections it is no light matter if love and duty come into conflict. They were in

conflict now, and the mother's heart was pierced with a two-edged sword. For if she truly believed what she believed, her duty towards Leonard was not only that of a tender mother to a suffering child, but the duty of one soul to another soul, whose responsibilities no man might deliver him from, nor make agreement unto God that he should be quit of them.

And if the disabling of his body did not stop the developing, one way or another, of his mind; if to learn fortitude and patience under his pains was not only his highest duty but his best chance of happiness, then, if she failed to teach him these, of what profit was it that she would willingly have endured all his sufferings ten times over that life might be all sunshine for him?

And deep down in her truthful soul another thought rankled. No one but herself knew how the pride of her heart had been stirred by Leonard's love for soldiers, his brave ambitions, the high spirit and heroic instincts which he inherited from a long line of gallant men and noble women. Had her pride been a sham? Did she only care for the courage of the battlefield? Was she willing that her son should be a coward, because it was not the trumpet's sound that summoned him to fortitude? She had strung her heart to the thought that, like many a mother of her race, she might live to gird on his sword; should she fail to help him to carry his cross?

At this point a cry came from below the window, and looking out she saw Leonard, beside himself with passion, raining blows like hail with his crutch upon poor Jemima; The Sweep watching matters nervously from under a garden seat.

Leonard had been irritable all day, and this was the second serious outbreak. The first had sent the Master of the House to town with a deeply knitted brow.

Vexed at being thwarted in some slight matter, when he was sitting in his wheel-chair by the side of his father in the library, he had seized a sheaf of papers tied together with



amber-coloured ribbon, and had torn them to shreds. It was a fair copy of the first two cantos of *The Soul's Satiety*, a poem on which the Master of the House had been engaged for some years. He had not touched it in Scotland, and was now beginning to work at it again. He could not scold his cripple child, but he had gone up to London in a far from comfortable mood.

And now Leonard was banging poor Jemima with his crutches! Lady Jane felt that her conscience had not roused her an hour too soon.

The Master of the House dined in town, and Leonard had tea with his mother in her very own room; and The Sweep had tea there too.

And when the old elms looked black against the primrose-coloured sky, and it had been Leonard's bedtime for half an hour past, the three were together still.

'I beg your pardon, Jemima, I am very sorry, and I'll never do so any more. I didn't want to beg your pardon before, because I was naughty, and because you trod on my Sweep's foot. But I beg your pardon now, because I am good—at least I am better, and I am going to try to be good.'

Leonard's voice was as clear as ever, and his manner as direct and forcible. Thus he contrived to say so much before Jemima burst in (she was putting him to bed):

'My lamb! My pretty! You're always good——'

'Don't tell stories, Jemima; and please don't contradict me, for it makes me cross; and if I am cross I can't be good; and if I am not good all tomorrow I am not to be allowed to go downstairs after dinner. And there's a V.C. coming to dinner, and I do want to see him more than I want anything else in all the world.'

## *Chapter VII*

‘What is there in the world to distinguish virtues from dishonour, or that can make anything rewardable, but the labour and the danger, the pain and the difficulty?’ JEREMY TAYLOR.

THE V.C. did not look like a bloodthirsty warrior. He had a smooth, oval, olivary face, and dreamy eyes. He was not very big, and he was absolutely unpretending. He was a young man, and only by the courtesy of his manners escaped the imputation of being a shy young man.

Before the campaign in which he won his cross he was most distinctly known in society as having a very beautiful voice and a very charming way of singing, and yet as giving himself no airs on the subject of an accomplishment which makes some men almost intolerable by their fellow men.

He was a favourite with ladies on several accounts, large and small. Among the latter was his fastidious choice in the words of the songs he sang, and sang with rare fineness of enunciation.

It is not always safe to believe that a singer means what he sings; but if he sing very noble words with justness and felicity, the ear rarely refuses to flatter itself that it is learning some of the secrets of a noble heart.

Upon a silence that could be felt the last notes of such a song had just fallen. The V.C.’s lips were closed, and those of the Master of the House (who had been accompanying him) were still parted with a smile of approval, when the wheels of his chair and some little fuss at the drawing-room door announced that Leonard had come to claim his mother’s promise. And when Lady Jane rose and went to meet him, the V.C. followed her.

‘There is my boy, of whom I told you. Leonard, this is the gentleman you have wished so much to see.’

The V.C., who sang so easily, was not a ready speaker, and the sight of Leonard took him by surprise, and kept him silent. He had been prepared to pity and be good-natured to a lame child who had a whim to see him; but not for this vision of rare beauty, beautifully dressed, with crippled limbs lapped in Eastern embroideries by his colour-loving father, and whose wan face and wonderful eyes were lambent with an intelligence so eager and so wistful, that the creature looked less like a morsel of suffering humanity than like a soul fretted by the brief detention of an all but broken chain.

'How do you do, V.C.? I am very glad to see you. I wanted to see you more than anything in the world. I hope you don't mind seeing me because I have been a coward, for I mean to be brave now; and that is why I wanted to see you so much, because you are such a very brave man. The reason I was a coward was partly with being so cross when my back hurts, but particularly with hitting Jemima with my crutches, for no one but a coward strikes a woman. She trod on my dog's toes. This is my dog. Please pat him; he would like to be patted by a V.C. He is called The Sweep because he is black. He lives with me all along. I *have* hit *him*, but I hope I shall not be naughty again any more. I wanted to grow up into a brave soldier, but I don't think perhaps that I ever can now; but Mother says I can be a brave cripple. I would rather be a brave soldier, but I'm going to try to be a brave cripple. Jemima says there's no saying what you can do till you try. Please show me your Victoria Cross.'

'It's on my tunic, and that's in my quarters in Camp. I'm so sorry.'

'So am I. I knew you lived in Camp. I like the Camp, and I want you to tell me about your hut. Do you know my uncle, Colonel Jones? Do you know my aunt, Mrs Jones? And my cousin, Mr Jones? Do you know a very nice Irishman, with one good-conduct stripe, called O'Reilly? Do you know my Cousin Alan in the Highlanders? But I believe he has gone

away. I have so many things I want to ask you, and oh!—those ladies are coming after us! They want to take you away. Look at that ugly old thing with a hook-nose and an eye-glass and a lace shawl and a green dress; she's just like the Poll Parrot in the housekeeper's room. But she's looking at you. Mother! Mother dear! Don't let them take him away. You did promise me, you know you did, that if I was good all today I should talk to the V.C. I can't talk to him if I can't have him all to myself. Do let us go into the library, and be all to ourselves. Do keep those women away, particularly the Poll Parrot. Oh, I hope I shan't be naughty! I do feel so impatient! I was good, you know I was. Why doesn't James come and show my friend into the library, and carry me out of my chair?'

'Let me carry you, little friend, and we'll run away together, and the company will say, "There goes a V.C. running away from a Poll Parrot in a lace shawl!"'

'Ha! ha! You are nice and funny. But *can* you carry me? Take off this thing! Did you ever carry anybody that had been hurt?'

'Yes, several people—much bigger than you.'

'Men?'

'Men.'

'Men hurt like me, or wounded in battle?'

'Wounded in battle.'

'Poor things! Did they die?'

'Some of them.'

'I shall die pretty soon, I believe. I meant to die young, but more grown up than this, and in battle. About your age, I think. How old are you?'

'I shall be twenty-five in October.'

'That's rather old. I meant about Uncle Rupert's age. He died in battle. He was seventeen. You carry very comfortably. Now we're safe! Put me on the yellow sofa, please. I want all the cushions, because of my back. It's because of my back, you know, that I can't grow up into a soldier.'

I don't think I possibly can. Soldiers do have to have such very straight backs, and Jemima thinks mine will never be straight again "on this side the grave". So I've got to try and be brave as I am; and that's why I wanted to see you. Do you mind my talking rather more than you? I have so very much to say, and I've only a quarter of an hour, because of its being long past my bedtime, and a good lot of that has gone.'

'Please talk, and let me listen.'

'Thank you. Pat The Sweep again, please. He thinks we're neglecting him. That's why he gets up and knocks you with his head.'

'Poor Sweep! Good old dog!'

'Thank you. Now should you think that if I am very good, and not cross about a lot of pain in my back and my head—really a good lot—that that would count up to be as brave as having one wound if I'd been a soldier?'

'Certainly.'

'Mother says it would, and I think it might. Not a very big wound, of course, but a poke with a spear, or something of that sort. It *is* very bad sometimes, particularly when it keeps you awake at night.'

'My little friend, *that* would count for lying out all night wounded on the field when the battle's over. Soldiers are not always fighting.'

'Did you ever lie out for a night on a battlefield?'

'Yes, once.'

'Did the night seem very long?'

'Very long; and we were very thirsty.'

'So am I sometimes, but I have barley-water and lemons by my bed, and jelly, and lots of things. You'd no barley-water, had you?'

'No.'

'Nothing?'

'Nothing till the rain fell, then we sucked our clothes.'

'It would take a lot of my bad nights to count up to that!

But I think when I'm ill in bed I might count that like being a soldier in hospital?'

'Of course.'

'I thought—no matter how good I got to be—nothing could ever count up to be as brave as a real battle, leading your men on and fighting for your country, though you know you may be killed any minute. But Mother says, if I *could* try very hard, and think of poor Jemima as well as myself, and keep brave in spite of feeling miserable, that then (particularly as I shan't be very long before I do die) it would be as good as if I'd lived to be as old as Uncle Rupert, and fought bravely when the battle was against me, and cheered on my men, though I knew I could never come out of it alive. Do you think it *could* count up to that? *Do you?* Oh, do answer me, and don't stroke my head! I get so impatient. You've been in battles—do you?'

'I do, I do.'

'You're a V.C., and you ought to know. I suppose nothing—not even if I could be good always, from this minute right away till I die—nothing could ever count up to the courage of a V.C.?''

'God knows it could, a thousand times over!'

'Where are you going? Please don't go. Look at me. They're not going to chop the Queen's head off, are they?'

'Heaven forbid! What are you thinking about?'

'Why, because—— Look at me again. Ah! you've winked it away, but your eyes were full of tears; and the only other brave man I ever heard of crying was Uncle Rupert, and that was because he knew they were going to chop the poor King's head off.'

'That was enough to make anybody cry.'

'I know it was. But do you know now, when I'm wheeling about in my chair and playing with him, and he looks at me wherever I go; sometimes for a bit I forget about the King, and I fancy he is sorry for me. Sorry, I mean, that I can't jump about, and creep under the table. Under the table

was the only place where I could get out of the sight of his eyes. Oh dear! there's Jemima.'

'But you are going to be good?'

'I know I am. And I'm going to do lessons again. I did a little French this morning—a story. Mother did most of it; but I know what the French officer called the poor old French soldier when he went to see him in a hospital.'

'What?'

'*Mon brave*. That means "My brave fellow". A nice name, wasn't it?'

'Very nice. Here's Jemima.'

'I'm coming, Jemima. I'm not going to be naughty; but you may go back to the chair, for this officer will carry me. He carries so comfortably. Come along, my Sweep. Thank you so much. You have put me in beautifully. Kiss me, please. Good night, V.C.'

'Good night, *mon brave*.'

## Chapter VIII

'I am a man of no strength at all of body, nor yet of mind; but would, if I could, though I can but crawl, spend my life in the pilgrims' way. When I came at the gate that is at the head of the way, the Lord of that place did entertain me freely . . . gave me such things that were necessary for my journey, and bid me hope to the end. . . . Other brunts I also look for; but this I have resolved on, to wit, to run when I can, to go when I cannot run, and to creep when I cannot go. As to the main, I thank Him that loves me, I am fixed; my way is before me, my mind is beyond the river that has no bridge, though I am as you see.

'And behold—Mr Ready-to-halt came by with his crutches in his hand, and he was also going on Pilgrimage.'

BUNYAN'S *Pilgrim's Progress*.

'AND IF we tie it with the amber-coloured ribbon, then Every time I have it out to put in a new Poor Thing, I shall remember how very naughty I was, and how I spoilt your poetry.'

'Then we'll certainly tie it with something else,' said the Master of the House, and he jerked away the ribbon with a gesture as decisive as his words. 'Let bygones be bygones. If *I* forget it, *you* needn't remember it!'

'Oh, but indeed I ought to remember it; and I do think I *better had*—to remind myself never, never to be so naughty again!'

'Your mother's own son!' muttered the Master of the House; and he added aloud: 'Well, I forbid you to remember it—so there! It'll be naughty if you do. Here's some red ribbon. That should please you, as you're so fond of soldiers.'

Leonard and his father were seated side by side at a table in the library. The dog lay at their feet.

They were very busy: the Master of the House working under Leonard's direction, who, issuing his orders from his wheel-chair, was so full of anxiety and importance that when Lady Jane opened the library door he knitted his brow and



put up one thin little hand, in a comically old-fashioned manner, to deprecate interruption.

'Don't make any disturbance, Mother dear, if you please. Father and I are very much engaged.'

'Don't you think, Len, it would be kind to let poor Mother see what we are doing, and tell her about it?'

Leonard pondered an instant.

'Well—I don't mind.'

Then, as his mother's arm came round him, he added impetuously:

'Yes, I should like to. *You* can show, Father dear, and I'll do all the explaining.'

The Master of the House displayed some sheets of paper, tied with ribbon, which already contained a good deal of his handiwork, including a finely illuminated capital L on the title-page.

'It is to be called the "Book of Poor Things", Mother dear. We're doing it in bits first; then it will be bound. It's a collection—a collection of Poor Things who've been hurt, like me; or blind, like the Organ-tuner; or had their heads—no, not their heads, they couldn't go on doing things after that—had their legs or their arms chopped off in battle, and are very good and brave about it, and managed very, very nearly as well as people who have got nothing the matter with them. Father doesn't think Poor Things is a good name. He wanted to call it "Masters of Fate", because of some poetry. What was it, Father?'

"Man is man and Master of his Fate," quoted the Master of the House.

'Yes, that's it. But I don't understand it so well as Poor Things. They *are* Poor Things, you know, and of course we shall only put in brave Poor Things: not cowardly Poor Things. It was all my idea; only Father is doing the ruling and printing and illuminating for me. I thought of it when the Organ-tuner was here.'

'The Organ-tuner?'

'Yes, I heard the organ, and I made James carry me in, and put me in the armchair close to the organ. And the Tuner was tuning, and he looked round, and James said, "It's the young gentleman," and the Tuner said, "Good morning, sir," and I said, "Good morning, Tuner; go on tuning, please, for I want to see you do it." And he went on; and he dropped a tin thing, like a big extinguisher, on to the floor; and he got down to look for it, and he felt about in such a funny way that I burst out laughing. I didn't mean to be rude; I couldn't help it. And I said, "Can't you see it? It's just under the table," And he said, "I can't see anything, sir; I'm stone blind." And he said, perhaps I would be kind enough to give it him. And I said I was very sorry, but I hadn't got my crutches, and so I couldn't get out of my chair without someone to help me. And he was so awfully sorry for me, you can't think! He said he didn't know I was more afflicted than he was; but I was awfully sorry for him, for I've tried shutting my eyes, and you can bear it just a minute, but then you *must* open them to see again. And I said, "How can you do anything when you see nothing but blackness all along?" And he says he can do well enough as long as he's spared the use of his limbs to earn his own livelihood. And I said, "Are there any more blind men, do you think, that earn their own livelihood? I wish I could earn mine!" And he said, "There are a good many blind tuners, sir." And I said, "Go on tuning, please. I like to hear you do it." And he went on, and I did like him so much. Do you know the blind tuner, Mother dear? And don't you like him very much? I think he is just what you think very good, and I think V.C. would think it nearly as brave as a battle to be afflicted and go on earning your own livelihood when you can see nothing but blackness all along. Poor man!'

'I do think it very good of him, my darling, and very brave.'

'I knew you would. And then I thought perhaps there are lots of brave afflicted people—Poor Things! and perhaps

there never was anybody but me who wasn't. And I wished I knew their names; and I asked the Tuner his name, and he told me. And then I thought of my book, for a good idea—a collection, you know. And I thought perhaps, by degrees, I might collect three hundred and sixty-five Poor Things, all brave. And so I am making Father rule it like his diary, and we've got the Tuner's name down for the first of January; and if you can think of anybody else you must tell me, and if I think they're afflicted enough and brave enough, I'll put them in. But I shall have to be rather particular, for we don't want to fill up too fast. Now, Father, I've done the explaining, so you can show your part. Look, Mother, hasn't he ruled it well? There's only one tiny mess, and it was The Sweep shaking the table with getting up to be patted.'

'He has ruled it beautifully. But what a handsome L!'

'Oh, I forget! Wait a minute, Father; the explaining isn't quite finished. What do you think that L stands for, Mother dear?'

'For Leonard, I suppose.'

'No, no! What fun! You're quite wrong. Guess again.'

'Is it not the Tuner's name?'

'Oh no! He's in the first of January—I told you so. And in plain printing. Father really couldn't illuminate three hundred and sixty-five Poor Things!'

'Of course he couldn't. It was silly of me to think so.'

'Do you give it up?'

'I must. I cannot guess.'

'It's the beginning of "*Lætus sorte mea*". Ah, you know now! You ought to have guessed without my telling you. Do you remember? I remember, and I mean to remember. I told Jemima that very night. I said, "It means 'Happy with my fate', and in our family we have to be happy with it, whatever sort of a one it is." For you told me so. And I told the Tuner, and he liked hearing about it very much. And then he went on tuning, and he smiled so when he was

listening to the notes, I thought he looked very happy; so I asked him, and he said, yes, he was always happy when he was meddling with a musical instrument. But I thought, most likely all brave Poor Things are happy with their fate, even if they can't tune; and I asked Father, and he said, "Yes", and so we are putting it into my collection—partly for that, and partly, when the coat-of-arms is done, to show that the book belongs to me. Now, Father dear, the explaining is really quite finished this time, and you may do all the rest of the show-off yourself!'

## Chapter IX

‘St George! a stirring life they lead,  
That have such neighbours near.’

*Marmion.*

OH, Jemima! Jemima! I know you are very kind; and I do mean not to be impatient; but either you’re telling stories or you’re talking nonsense, and that’s a fact. How can you say that that blue stuff is a beautiful match, and will wash the exact colour, and that you’re sure I shall like it when it’s made up with a cord and tassels, when it’s *not* the blue I want, and when you *know* the men in hospital haven’t any tassels to their dressing-gowns at all! You’re as bad as that horrid shopman who made me so angry. If I had not been obliged to be good, I should have liked to hit him hard with my crutch, when he kept on saying he knew I should prefer a shawl pattern lined with crimson if I would let him send one. Oh, here comes Father! Now, that’s right; he’ll know. Father dear, *is* this pattern the same colour as that?’

‘Certainly not. But what’s the matter, my child?’

‘It’s about my dressing-gown; and I do get so tired about it, because people will talk nonsense, and won’t speak the truth, and won’t believe I know what I want myself. Now, I’ll tell you what I want. Do you know the Hospital Lines?’

‘In the Camp? Yes.’

‘And you’ve seen all the invalids walking about in blue dressing-gowns and little red ties?’

‘Yes. Charming bits of colour.’

‘Hurrah! that’s just it! Now, Father dear, if you wanted a dressing-gown exactly like that—*would* you have one made of this?’

‘Not if I knew it! Crude, coarse, staring—please don’t

wave it in front of my eyes, unless you want to make me feel like a bull with a red flag before him!’

‘Oh, Father dear, you *are* sensible! (Jemima, throw this pattern away, please!) But you’d have felt far worse if you’d seen the shawl pattern lined with crimson. Oh, I do wish I could have been a bull that wasn’t obliged to be *letus* for half a minute, to give that shopman just one toss! But I believe the best way to do will be as O’Reilly says—get Uncle Henry to buy me a real one out of store, and have it made smaller for me. And I should like it “out of store”.’

From this conversation it will be seen that Leonard’s military bias knew no change. Had it been less strong it could only have served to intensify the pain of the heart-breaking associations which anything connected with the troops now naturally raised in his parents’ minds. But it was a sore subject that fairly healed itself.

The Camp had proved a more cruel neighbour than the Master of the House had ever imagined in his forebodings; but it also proved a friend. For if the high ambitious spirit, the ardent imagination, the vigorous will, which fired the boy’s fancy for soldiers and soldier life, had thus led to his calamity, they found in that sympathy with men of hardihood and lives of discipline, not only an interest that never failed and that lifted the sufferer out of himself, but a constant incentive to those virtues of courage and patience for which he struggled with touching conscientiousness.

Then, without disparagement to the earnestness of his efforts to be good, it will be well believed that his parents did their best to make goodness easy to him. His vigorous individuality still swayed the plans of the household, and these came to be regulated by those of the Camp to a degree which half annoyed and half amused its Master.

The *Asholt Gazette* was delivered as regularly as *The Times*; but on special occasions, the arrangements for which were only known the night before, O’Reilly, or some other Orderly, might be seen wending his way up the Elm

Avenue by breakfast time, 'with Colonel Jones's compliments, and the Orders of the Day for the young gentleman'. And so many were the military displays at which Leonard contrived to be present, that the associations of pleasure and alleviation with parades and manœuvres came at last almost to blot out the associations of pain connected with that fatal Field Day.

He drove about a great deal, either among air-cushions in the big carriage or in a sort of perambulator of his own, which was all too easily pushed by anyone, and by the side of which The Sweep walked slowly and contentedly, stopping when Leonard stopped, wagging his tail when Leonard spoke, and keeping sympathetic step to the invalid's pace with four sinewy black legs, which were young enough and strong enough to have ranged for miles over the heather hills and never felt fatigue. A true Dog Friend!

What the Master of the House pleasantly called 'Our Military Mania', seemed to have reached its climax during certain July manœuvres of the regiments stationed at Asholt, and of additional troops who lay out under canvas in the surrounding countryside.

Into this mimic campaign Leonard threw himself heart and soul. His Camp friends furnished him with early information of the plans for each day, so far as the generals of the respective forces allowed them to get wind, and with an energy that defied his disabilities he drove about after 'the armies', and then scrambled on his crutches to points of vantage where the carriage could not go.

And the Master of the House went with him.

The house itself seemed soldier-bewitched. Orderlies were as plentiful as rooks among the elm trees. The staff clattered in and out, and had luncheon at unusual hours, and strewed the cedarwood hall with swords and cocked hats, and made low bows over Lady Jane's hand, and rode away among the trees.

These were weeks of pleasure and enthusiasm for Leonard

and of not less delight for The Sweep; but they were followed by an illness.

That Leonard bore his sufferings better helped to conceal the fact that they undoubtedly increased; and he over-fatigued himself and got a chill, and had to go to bed, and took The Sweep to bed with him.

And it was when he could play at no 'soldier game', except that of 'being in hospital', that he made up his mind to have a blue dressing-gown of regulation colour and pattern, and met with the difficulties aforesaid in carrying out his whim.



## Chapter X

'Fills the room up of my absent child,  
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;  
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words.  
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,  
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form.'

*King John*, Act III.

LONG YEARS after they were written, a bundle of letters lay in the drawer of a cabinet in Lady Jane's morning-room, carefully kept, each in its own envelope, and every envelope stamped with the postmark of Asholt Camp.

They were in Leonard's handwriting. A childish hand, though good for his age, but round and clear as his own speech.

After much coaxing and considering, and after consulting with the doctors, Leonard had been allowed to visit the Barrack Master and his wife. After his illness he was taken to the seaside, which he liked so little that he was bribed to stay there by the promise that, if the doctor would allow it, he should, on his return, have the desire of his heart, and be permitted to live for a time 'in Camp', and sleep in a hut.

The doctor gave leave. Small quarters would neither mar nor mend an injured spine; and if he felt the lack of space and luxuries to which he was accustomed, he would then be content to return home.

The Barrack Master's hut only boasted one spare bed-chamber for visitors, and when Leonard and his dog were in it there was not much elbow-room. A sort of cupboard was appropriated for the use of Jemima, and Lady Jane drove constantly into Camp to see her son. Meanwhile he proved a very good correspondent, as his letters will show for themselves.

## LETTER I

BARRACK MASTER'S HUT,  
*The Camp, Asholt.*

MY DEAR, DEAR MOTHER,

I hope you are quite well, and Father also. I am very happy, and so is The Sweep. He tried sleeping on my bed last night, but there was not room, though I gave him as much as ever I could. So he slept on the floor. It is a camp-bed, and folds up, if you want it to. We have nothing like it. It belonged to a real General. The General is dead. Uncle Henry bought it at his sale. You always have a sale if you die, and your brother officers buy your things to pay your debts. Sometimes you get them very cheap. I mean the things.

The drawers fold up too. I mean the chest of drawers, and so does the washhand-stand. It goes into the corner, and takes up very little room. There couldn't be a bigger one, or the door would not open—the one that leads into the kitchen. The other door leads into a passage. I like having the kitchen next me. You can hear everything. You can hear O'Reilly come in the morning, and I call to him to open my door, and he says, 'Yes, sir', and opens it, and lets The Sweep out for a run, and takes my boots. And you can hear the tap of the boiler running with your hot water before she brings it, and you can smell the bacon frying for breakfast.

And Adelaide was afraid I should not like being woke up so early, but I do. I wake a good many times. First with the gun. It's like a very short thunder, and shakes you. And then the bugles play. Father would like *them*! And then right away in the distance trumpets. And the air comes in so fresh at the window. And you pull up the clothes, if they've fallen off you, and go to sleep again.

Mine had all fallen off, except the sheet, and The Sweep was lying on them. Wasn't it clever of him to have found them in the dark? If I can't keep them on, I'm going to have campaigning blankets; they are sewed up like a bag, and you get into them.

What do you think I found on my coverlet when I went to bed? A real, proper, blue dressing-gown, and a crimson tie! It came out of store, and Aunt Adelaide made it smaller herself. Wasn't it kind of her?

I have got it on now. Presently I am going to dress properly, and O'Reilly is going to wheel me down to the stores. It will be great fun. My cough has been pretty bad, but it's no worse than it was at home.

There's a soldier come for the letters, and they are obliged to be ready.

I am, your loving and dutiful son,

LEONARD.

PS. Uncle Henry says his father was very old-fashioned, and he always liked him to put 'Your dutiful son', so I put it to you.

All these crosses mean kisses, Jemima told me.

#### LETTER II

. . . I WENT to church yesterday, though it was only Tuesday. I need not have gone unless I liked, but I liked. There is service every evening in the Iron Church, and Aunt Adelaide goes, and so do I, and sometimes Uncle Henry. There are not very many people go, but they behave very well, what there are. You can't tell what the officers belong to in the afternoon, because they are in plain clothes; but Aunt Adelaide thinks they were Royal Engineers, except one Commissariat one, and an A.D.C., and the Colonel of a regiment that marched in last week. You can't tell what ladies belong to unless you know them.

You can always tell the men. Some were Barrack

Sergeants, and some were Sappers, and there were two Gunners, and an Army Hospital Corps, and a Cavalry Corporal who came all the way from the barracks, and sat near the door, and said very long prayers to himself at the end. And there were some schoolmasters, and a man with grey hair and no uniform, who mends the roofs and teaches in the Sunday School, and I forget the rest. Most of the choir are Sappers and Commissariat men, and the boys are soldiers' sons. The Sappers and Commissariat belong to our Brigade.

There is no Sexton to our Church. He's a Church Orderly. He has put me a kind of a back in the corner of one of the Officers' Seats, to make me comfortable in church, and a very high footstool. I mean to go every day, and as often as I can on Sundays, without getting too much tired.

You can go very often on Sunday mornings if you want to. They begin at eight o'clock, and go on till luncheon. There's a fresh band, and a fresh chaplain, and a fresh sermon, and a fresh congregation every time. Those are Parade Services. The others are Voluntary Services, and I thought that meant for the Volunteers; but O'Reilly laughed, and said, 'No, it only means that there's no occasion to go to them at all'—he means unless you like. But then I do like. There's no sermon on weekdays. Uncle Henry is very glad, and so am I. I think it might make my back ache.

I am afraid, dear Mother, that you won't be able to understand all I write to you from the Camp; but if you don't, you must ask me, and I'll explain.

When I say *our quarters*, remember I mean our hut; and when I say *rations* it means bread and meat, and I'm not quite sure if it means coals and candles as well. But I think I'll make you a Dictionary if I can get a ruled book from the Canteen. It would make this letter too much to go for a penny if I put all the words in I know.

Cousin George tells me them when he comes in after mess. He told me the Camp name for Iron Church is Tin Tabernacle; but Aunt Adelaide says it's not, and I'm not to call it so, so I don't. But that's what he says.

I like Cousin George very much. I like his uniform. He is very thin, particularly round the waist. Uncle Henry is very stout, particularly round the waist. Last night George came in after mess, and two other officers out of his regiment came too. And then another officer came in. And they chaffed Uncle Henry, and Uncle Henry doesn't mind. And the other officer said, 'Three times round a Subaltern—once round a Barrack Master'. And so they got Uncle Henry's sword-belt out of his dressing-room, and George and his friends stood back to back, and held up their jackets out of the way, and the other officer put the belt right round them, all three, and told them not to laugh. And Aunt Adelaide said, 'Oh!' and 'You'll hurt them'. And he said, 'Not a bit of it'. And he buckled it. So that shows. It was great fun.

I am, your loving and dutiful son,

LEONARD.

PS. The other officer is an Irish officer—at least, I think so, but I can't be quite sure, because he won't speak the truth. I said, 'You talk rather like O'Reilly. Are you an Irish soldier?' And he said, 'I'd the misfortune to be quartered for six months in the County Cork, and it was the ruin of my French accent'. So I said, 'Are you a Frenchman?' and they all laughed, so I don't know.

PS. No. 2. My back has been very bad, but Aunt Adelaide says I have been very good. This is not meant for swagger, but to let you know.

(*Swagger* means boasting. If you're a soldier, swagger is the next worst thing to running away.)

PS. No. 3. I know another officer now. I like him. He

is a D.A.Q.M.G. I would let you guess that if you could ever find it out, but you couldn't. It means Deputy-Assistant-Quarter-Master-General.

He is not so grand as you would think; a plain General is really grander. Uncle Henry says so, and he knows.

#### LETTER III

. . . I HAVE seen V.C. I have seen him twice. I have seen his cross. The first time was at the Sports. Aunt Adelaide drove me there in the pony carriage. We stopped at the Enclosure. The Enclosure is a rope, with a man taking tickets. The Sports are inside; so is the tent, with tea; so are the ladies, in awfully pretty dresses, and the officers walking round them.

There's great fun outside, at least I should think so. There's a crowd of people, and booths, and a skeleton man. I saw his picture. I should like to have seen him, but Aunt Adelaide didn't want to, so I tried to be *letus* without.

When we got to the Enclosure there was a gentleman taking his ticket, and when he turned round he was V.C. Wasn't it funny? So he came back and said, 'Why, here's my little friend!' And he said, 'You must let me carry you'. And so he did, and put me among the ladies. But the ladies got him a good deal. He went and talked to lots of them, but I tried to be *letus* without him; and then Cousin George came, and lots of others, and then the V.C. came back and showed me things about the Sports.

Sports are very hard work: they make you so hot and tired; but they are very nice to watch. The races were great fun, particularly when they fell in the water, and the men in sacks who hop, and the blindfolded men with wheelbarrows. Oh, they were so funny! They kept wheeling into each other, all except one, and he went wheeling and wheeling right away up the field, all by himself and all wrong! I did laugh.

But what I liked best were the tent-pegging men, and most best of all, the Tug of War.

The Irish officer did tent-pegging. He has the dearest pony you ever saw. He is so fond of it, and it is so fond of him. He talks to it in Irish, and it understands him. He cut off the Turk's head—not a real Turk, a sham Turk, and not a whole one, only the head stuck on a pole.

The Tug of War was splendid! Two sets of men pulling at a rope to see which is strongest. They did pull! They pulled so hard, both of them, with all their might and main, that we thought it must be a drawn battle. But at last one set pulled the other over, and then there was such a noise that my head ached dreadfully, and the Irish officer carried me into the tent and gave me some tea. And then we went home.

The next time I saw V.C. was on Sunday at Parade Service. He is on the Staff, and wears a cocked hat. He came in with the General and the A.D.C. who was at church on Tuesday, and I was so glad to see him.

After church, everybody went about saying 'Good morning', and 'How hot it was in Church!' and V.C. helped me with my crutches, and showed me his cross. And the General came up and spoke to me, and I saw his medals, and he asked how you were, and I said, 'Quite well, thank you'. And then he talked to a lady with some little boys dressed like sailors. She said how hot it was in Church, and he said, 'I thought the roof was coming off with that last hymn'. And she said, 'My little boys call it the "Tug of War Hymn"; they are very fond of it'. And he said, 'The men seem very fond of it'. And he turned round to an officer I didn't know, and said, 'They ran away from you that last verse but one'. And the officer said, 'Yes, sir, they always do; so I stop the organ and let them have it their own way'.

I asked Aunt Adelaide, 'Does that officer play the organ?' And she said, 'Yes, and he trains the choir. He's

coming in to supper'. So he came. If the officers stay sermon on Sunday evenings, they are late for mess. So the chaplain stops after prayers, and anybody that likes to go out before sermon can. If they stay sermon, they go to supper with some of the married officers instead of dining at mess.

So he came. I liked him awfully. He plays like Father, only I think he can play more difficult things.

He says 'Tug of War Hymn' is a very good name for that hymn, because the men are so fond of it they all sing, and the ones at the bottom of the church 'drag over' the choir and the organ.

He said, 'I've talked till I'm black in the face, and all to no purpose. It would try the patience of a saint'. So I said, 'Are you a saint?' And he laughed and said, 'No, I'm afraid not; I'm only a Kapellmeister'. So I call him 'Kapellmeister'. I do like him.

I do like the 'Tug of War Hymn'. It begins, 'The Son of God goes forth to war'. That's the one. But we have it to a tune of our own on Saints' Days. The verse the men tug with is, 'A noble army, men and boys'. I think they like it because it's about the army; and so do I.

I am, your loving and dutiful son,

LEONARD.

PS. I call the ones with cocked hats and feathers, 'Cockatoos'. There was another Cockatoo who walked away with the General. Not very big. About the bigness of the stuffed General in that pawnbroker's window; and I do think he had quite as many medals. I wanted to see them. I wish I had. He looked at me. He had a very gentle face; but I was afraid of it. Was I a coward?

You remember what these crosses are, don't you? I told you.



## LETTER IV

THIS is a very short letter. It's only to ask you to send my book of Poor Things by the Orderly who takes this, unless you are quite sure you are coming to see me today.

A lot of officers are collecting for me, and there's one in the Engineers can print very well, so he'll put them in.

A Colonel with only one arm dined here yesterday. You can't think how well he manages, using first his knife and then his fork, and talking so politely all the time. He has all kinds of dodges, so as not to give trouble and do everything for himself. I mean to put him in.

I wrote to Cousin Alan, and asked him to collect for me. I like writing letters, and I do like getting them. Uncle Henry says he hates a lot of posts in the day. I hate posts when there's nothing for me. I like all the rest.

Cousin Alan wrote back by return. He says he can only think of the old chap whose legs were cut off in battle:

And when his legs were smitten off,  
He fought upon his stumps!

It was very brave, if it's true. Do you think it is? He did not tell me his name.

Your loving and dutiful son,

LEONARD.

PS. I am *letus sorte mea*, and so is The Sweep.

## LETTER V

THIS letter is not about a Poor Thing. It's about a saint—a soldier saint—which I and the Chaplain think nearly the best kind. His name was Martin, he got to be a Bishop in the end, but when he first enlisted he was only a catechumen. Do you know what a catechumen is, dear Mother? Perhaps if you're not quite so high-church as the Engineer I told you of, who prints so beautifully, you may not know. It means when you've been born a heathen,

and are going to be a Christian, only you've not yet been baptized. The Engineer has given me a picture of him, St Martin, I mean, and now he has printed underneath it, in beautiful thick black letters that you can hardly read if you don't know what they are, and the very particular words in red, 'Martin—yet but a Catechumen!' He can illuminate too, though not quite so well as Father. He is very high-church, and I'm high-church, and so is our Chaplain, but he is broad as well. The Engineer thinks he's rather too broad, but Uncle Henry and Aunt Adelaide think he's quite perfect, and so do I, and so does everybody else. He comes in sometimes, but not very often because he's so busy. He came the other night because I wanted to confess. What I wanted to confess was that I had laughed in church. He is a very big man, and he has a very big surplice, with a great lot of gathers behind, which makes my Engineer very angry, because it's the wrong shape, and he preaches splendidly, the Chaplain I mean, straight out of his head, and when all the soldiers are listening he swings his arms about, and the surplice gets in his way, and he catches hold of it, and oh! Mother dear, I must tell you what it reminded me of. When I was very little, and Father used to tie a knot in his big pocket-handkerchief and put his first finger into it to make a head that nodded, and wind the rest round his hand, and stick out his thumb and another finger for arms, and do the 'Yea-verily-man' to amuse you and me. It was last Sunday, and a most splendid sermon, but his stole got round under his ear, and his sleeves did look just like the Yea-verily-man, and I tried not to look, and then I caught the Irish officer's eye and he twinkled, and then I laughed, because I remembered his telling Aunt Adelaide, 'That's the grandest old Padre that ever got up into a pulpit, but did ye ever see a man get so mixed up with his clothes?' I was very sorry when I laughed, so I settled I would confess, for my Engineer thinks you ought

always to confess, so when our Chaplain came in after dinner on Monday I confessed, but he only laughed, till he broke down Aunt Adelaide's black and gold chair. He is too big for it, really. Aunt Adelaide never lets Uncle Henry sit on it. So he was very sorry, and Aunt Adelaide begged him not to mind, and then in came my Engineer in war-paint (if you look out *war-paint* in the Canteen Book I gave you, you'll see what it means). He was in war-paint because he was Orderly Officer for the evening, and he'd got his sword under one arm, and the picture under the other and his short cloak on to keep it dry, because it was raining. He made the frame himself; he can make Oxford frames quite well, and he's going to teach me how to. Then I said, 'Who is it?' so he told me, and now I'm going to tell you, in case you don't know. Well, St Martin was born in Hungary, in the year 316. His father and mother were heathens, but when he was about my age he made up his mind he would be a Christian. His father and mother were so afraid of his turning into a monk, that as soon as he was old enough they enlisted him in the army, hoping that would cure him of wanting to be a Christian, but it didn't—Martin wanted to be a Christian just as much as ever; still he got interested with his work and his comrades, and he dawdled on only a catechumen, and didn't make full profession and get baptized. One winter his corps was quartered at Amiens, and on a very bitter night, near the gates he saw a half-naked beggar shivering with the cold. (I asked my Engineer, 'Was he Orderly Officer for the evening?' but he said, 'More likely on patrol duty, with some of his comrades'. However, he says he won't be sure, for Martin was Tribune, which is very nearly a Colonel, two years afterwards, he knows.) When Martin saw the beggar at the gate, he pulled out his big military cloak, and drew his sword, and cut it in half, and wrapped half of it round the poor beggar to keep him warm. I know you'll think

him very kind, but wait a bit, that's not all. Next night when Martin the soldier was asleep he had a vision. Did you ever have a vision? I wish I could! This was Martin's vision. He saw Christ our Lord in Heaven, sitting among the shining hosts, and wearing over one shoulder half a military cloak, and as Martin saw Him he heard Him say, 'Behold the mantle given to Me by Martin—yet but a Catechumen!' After that vision he didn't wait any longer; he was baptized at once.

Mother dear, I've told you this quite truthfully, but I can't tell it you so *splendidly* as my Engineer did, standing with his back to the fire and holding out his cape, and drawing his sword to show me how Martin divided his cloak with the beggar. Aunt Adelaide isn't afraid of swords, she is too used to them, but she says she thinks soldiers do things in huts they would never think of doing in big rooms, just to show how neatly they can manage without hurting anything. The Chaplain broke the chair, but then he isn't exactly a soldier, and the D.A.Q.M.G. that I told you of comes in sometimes and says, 'I beg your pardon, Mrs Jones, but I must', and puts both his hands on the end of the sofa, and lifts his body till he gets his legs sticking straight out. They are very long legs, and he and the sofa go nearly across the room, but he never kicks anything, it's a kind of athletics; and there's another officer who comes in at one door and Catherine-wheels right across to the farthest door, and he is over six foot, too, but they never break anything. We do laugh.

I wish you could have seen my Engineer doing St Martin. He had to go directly afterwards, and then the Chaplain came and stood in front of me, on the hearthrug, in the firelight, just where my Engineer had been standing, and he took up the picture, and looked at it. So I said, 'Do you know about St Martin?' and he said he did, and he said, 'One of the greatest of those many Soldiers of the Cross who have also fought under earthly banners'. Then

he put down the picture, and got hold of his elbow with his hand, as if he was holding his surplice out of the way, and said: 'Great, as well as good, for this reason: he was one of those rare souls to whom the counsels of God are clear, not to the utmost of the times in which he lived—but in advance of those times. Such men are not always popular, nor even largely successful in their day, but the light they hold lightens more generations of this naughty world than the pious tapers of commoner men. You know that Martin the Catechumen became Martin the Saint—do you know that Martin the Soldier became Martin the Bishop?—and that in an age of credulity and fanaticism, that man of God discredited some relics very popular with the pious in his diocese, and proved and exposed them to be those of an executed robber. Later in life it is recorded of Martin, Bishop of Tours, that he lifted his voice in protest against persecutions for religion, and the punishment of heretics. In the nineteenth century we are little able to judge how great must have been the faith of that man in the God of truth and of love.' It was like a little sermon and I think this is exactly how he said it, for I got Aunt Adelaide to write it out for me this morning, and she remembers sermons awfully well. I've been looking St Martin out in the calendar; his day is the 11th of November. He is not a Collect, Epistle and Gospel Saint, only one of the Black Letter ones; but the 11th of November is going to be on a Sunday this year, and I am so glad, for I've asked our Chaplain if we may have the 'Tug of War Hymn' for St Martin—and he has given leave.

It's a long way off; I wish it came sooner. So now, Mother dear, you have time to make your arrangements as you like, but you see that whatever happens, *I* must be in Camp on St Martin's Day.

Your loving and dutiful son,

LEONARD.

## *Chapter XI*

‘I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth . . .’—2 Tim. iv. 7.

**I**T WAS Sunday. Sunday, the eleventh of November—St Martin’s Day.

Though it was in November, a summer’s day. A day of that Little Summer which alternately claims St Luke and St Martin as its patrons, and is apt to shine its brightest when it can claim both—on the feast of All Saints.

Sunday in Camp. With curious points of likeness and unlikeness to English Sundays elsewhere. Like in that general aspect of tidiness and quiet, of gravity and pause, which betrays that a hard-working and very practical people have thought good to keep much of the Sabbath with its Sunday. Like too in the little groups of children, gay in Sunday best, and grave with Sunday books, trotting to Sunday School.

Unlike, in that to see all the men about the place washed and shaved is not, among soldiers, peculiar to Sunday. Unlike also in a more festal feeling produced by the gay gatherings of men and officers on Church Parade (far distant be the day when Parade Services shall be abolished!), and by the exhilarating sounds of the bands with which each regiment marched from its parade ground to the church.

Here and there small detachments might be met making their way to the Roman Catholic Church in camp, or to places of various denominations in the neighbouring town; and on Blind Baby’s Parade (where he was prematurely crushing his Sunday frock with his drum-basket in ecstatic sympathy with the band), a corporal of exceptional views was parading himself and two privates of the same denomination,

before marching the three of them to their own peculiar prayer meeting.

The Brigade for the Iron Church paraded early (the sunshine and sweet air seemed to promote alacrity). And after the men were seated their officers still lingered outside, chatting with the ladies and the staff, as these assembled by degrees, and sunning themselves in the genial warmth of St Martin's Little Summer.

The V.C. was talking with the little boys in sailor suits and their mother, when the officer who played the organ came towards them.

'Good morning, Kapellmeister!' said two or three voices.

Nicknames were common in the camp, and this one had been rapidly adopted.

'Ye look cloudy this fine morning, Kapellmeister!' cried the Irish officer. 'Got the toothache?'

The Kapellmeister shook his head, and forced a smile which rather intensified than diminished the gloom of a countenance which did not naturally lend itself to lines of levity. Was he not a Scotchman and also a musician? His lips smiled in answer to the chaff, but his sombre eyes were fixed on the V.C. They had—as some eyes have—an odd, summoning power, and the V.C. went to meet him.

When he said, 'I was in there this morning', the V.C.'s eyes followed the Kapellmeister's to the Barrack Master's hut, and his own face fell.

'He wants the "Tug of War Hymn",' said the Kapellmeister.

'He's not coming to church?'

'Oh no; but he's set his heart on hearing the "Tug of War Hymn" through his bedroom window; and it seems the Chaplain has promised we shall have it today. It's a most amazing thing,' added the Kapellmeister, shooting out one arm with a gesture common to him when oppressed by an idea, 'it's a *most* amazing thing! For I think, if I were in my grave, that hymn—as these men bolt with it—might

make me turn in my place of rest; but it's the last thing I should care to hear if I were ill in bed! However, he wants it, poor lad, and he asked me to ask you if you would turn outside when it begins, and sing so that he can hear your voice and the words.'

'Oh, he can never hear me over there!'

'He can hear you fast enough! It's quite close. He begged me to ask you, and I was to say it's his last Sunday.'

There was a pause. The V.C. looked at the little 'Officers' Door', which was close to his usual seat, which always stood open in summer weather, and half in and half out of which men often stood in the crush of a Parade Service. There was no difficulty in the matter except his own intense dislike to anything approaching to display. Also he had become more attached than he could have believed possible to the gallant-hearted child whose worship of him had been flattery as delicate as it was sincere. It was no small pain to know that the boy lay dying—a pain he would have preferred to bear in silence.

'Is he very much set upon it?'

'Absolutely.'

'Is she—is Lady Jane there?'

'All of them. He can't last the day out.'

'When will it be sung—that hymn, I mean?'

'I've put it on after the third Collect.'

'All right.'

The V.C. took up his sword and went to his seat, and the Kapellmeister took up his and went to the organ.

In the Barrack Master's hut my hero lay dying. His mind was now absolutely clear, but during the night it had wandered—wandered in a delirium that was perhaps some solace of his sufferings, for he had believed himself to be a soldier on active service, bearing the brunt of battle and the pain of wounds; and when fever consumed him, he thought it was the heat of India that parched his throat and scorched



his skin, and called again and again in noble raving to imaginary comrades to keep up heart and press forward.

About four o'clock he sank into stupor, and the doctor forced Lady Jane to go and lie down, and the Colonel took his wife away to rest also.

At gun-fire Leonard opened his eyes. For some minutes he gazed straight ahead of him, and the Master of the House, who sat by his bedside, could not be sure whether he were still delirious or no; but when their eyes met he saw that Leonard's senses had returned to him, and kissed the wan little hand that was feeling about for The Sweep's head in silence that he almost feared to break.

Leonard broke in by saying, 'When did you bring Uncle Rupert to Camp, Father dear?'

'Uncle Rupert is at home, my darling; and you are in Uncle Henry's hut.'

'I know I am; and so is Uncle Rupert. He is at the end of the room there. Can't you see him?'

'No, Len; I only see the wall, with your text on it that poor old Father did for you.'

'My "Goodly heritage", you mean? I can't see that now. Uncle Rupert is in front of it. I thought you put him there. Only he's out of his frame, and—it's very odd!'

'What's odd, my darling?'

'Someone has wiped away all the tears from his eyes.'

'Hymn two hundred and sixty-three: "Fight the good fight of faith".'

The third Collect was just ended, and a prolonged and somewhat irregular Amen was dying away among the choir, who were beginning to feel for their hymn-books.

The lack of precision, the 'dropping shots' style in which that Amen was delivered, would have been more exasperating to the Kapellmeister, if his own attention had not been for the moment diverted by anxiety to know if the V.C. remembered that the time had come.

As the Chaplain gave out the hymn, the Kapellmeister gave one glance of an eye, as searching as it was sombre, round the corner of that odd little curtain which it is the custom to hang behind an organist; and this sufficing to tell him that the V.C. had not forgotten, he drew out certain very vocal stops, and bending himself to manual and pedal, gave forth the popular melody of the 'Tug of War Hymn' with a precision indicative of a resolution to have it sung in strict time, or know the reason why.

And as nine hundred and odd men rose to their feet with some clatter of heavy boots and accoutrements the V.C. turned quietly out of the crowded church, and stood outside upon the steps, bare-headed in the sunshine of St Martin's Little Summer, and with the tiniest of hymn-books between his fingers and thumb.

Circumstances had made a soldier of the V.C., but by nature he was a student. When he brought the little hymn-book to his eyes to get a mental grasp of the hymn before he began to sing it, he committed the first four lines to an intelligence sufficiently trained to hold them in remembrance for the brief time that it would take to sing them. Involuntarily his active brain did more, and was crossed by a critical sense of the crude, barbaric taste of childhood, and a wonder what consolation the suffering boy could find in these gaudy lines:

'The Son of God goes forth to war,  
A kingly crown to gain;  
His blood-red banner streams afar:  
Who follows in His train?'

But when he brought the little hymn-book to his eyes to take in the next four lines, they startled him with the revulsion of a sudden sympathy; and lifting his face towards the Barrack Master's hut, he sang—as he rarely sang in drawing-rooms, even words the most felicitous to melodies the most sweet—sang not only to the delight of dying ears, but so

that the Kapellmeister himself heard him, and smiled as he heard:

‘Who best can drink his cup of woe  
Triumphant over pain,  
Who patient bears his cross below,  
He follows in His train.’

On each side of Leonard’s bed, like guardian angels, knelt his father and mother. At his feet lay The Sweep who now and then lifted a long, melancholy nose and anxious eyes.

At the foot of the bed stood the Barrack Master. He had taken up this position at the request of the Master of the House, who had avoided any further allusion to Leonard’s fancy that their Naseby Ancestor had come to Asholt Camp, but had begged his big brother-in-law to stand there and blot out Uncle Rupert’s ghost with his substantial body.

But whether Leonard perceived the *ruse*, forgot Uncle Rupert, or saw him all the same, by no word or sign did he ever betray.

Near the window sat Aunt Adelaide, with her prayer-book, following the service in her own orderly and pious fashion, sometimes saying a prayer aloud at Leonard’s bidding, and anon replying to his oft-repeated inquiry: ‘Is it the third Collect yet, Aunty dear?’

She had turned her head, more quickly than usual to speak, when, clear and strenuous on vocal stops, came the melody of the ‘Tug of War Hymn’.

‘There! There it is! Oh, good Kapellmeister! Mother dear, please go to the window and see if V.C. is there, and wave your hand to him. Father dear, lift me up a little, please. Ah, now I hear him! Good V.C.! I don’t believe you’ll sing better than that when you’re promoted to be an angel. Are the men singing pretty loud? May I have a little of that stuff to keep me from coughing, Mother dear? You

know I am not impatient; but I do hope, please God, I shan't die till I've just heard them *tug* that verse once more!

The sight of Lady Jane had distracted the V.C.'s thoughts from the hymn. He was singing mechanically, when he became conscious of some increasing pressure and irregularity in the time. Then he remembered what it was. The soldiers were beginning to tug.

In a moment more the organ stopped, and the V.C. found himself, with over nine hundred men at his back, singing without accompaniment, and in unison:

'A noble army—men and boys,  
The matron and the maid,  
Around the Saviour's Throne rejoice,  
In robes of white arrayed.'

The Kapellmeister conceded that verse to the shouts of the congregation; but he invariably reclaimed control over the last.

Even now, as the men paused to take breath after their 'tug', the organ spoke again, softly, but seraphically, and clearer and sweeter above the voices behind him rose the voice of the V.C. singing, to his little friend—

'They climb'd the steep ascent of Heav'n,  
Through peril, toil, and pain . . .'

The men sang on; but the V.C. stopped, as if he had been shot. For a man's hand had come to the Barrack Master's window and pulled the white blind down.

## Chapter XII

'He that hath found some fledged-bird's nest may know  
At first sight, if the bird be flown;  
But what fair dell or grove he sings in now,  
'That is to him unknown.'

HENRY VAUGHAN.

TRUE TO its character as an emblem of human life, the Camp stands on, with all its little manners and customs, whilst the men who garrison it pass rapidly away.

Strange as the vicissitudes of a whole generation elsewhere, are the changes and chances that a few years bring to those who were stationed there together.

To what unforeseen celebrity (or to a dropping out of one's life and even hearsay that once seemed quite as little likely) do one's old neighbours sometimes come! They seem to pass in a few drill seasons as other men pass by lifetimes. Some to foolishness and forgetfulness, and some to fame. This old acquaintance to unexpected glory; that dear friend—alas!—to the grave. And some—God speed them!—to the world's end and back, following the drum till it leads them home again, with familiar faces little changed—with boys and girls, perchance, very greatly changed—and with hearts not changed at all. Can the last parting do much to hurt such friendships between good souls who have so long learnt to say farewell; to love in absence, to trust through silence, and to have faith in reunion?

The Barrack Master's appointment was an unusually permanent one; and he and his wife lived on in Asholt Camp, and saw regiments come and go, as O'Reilly had prophesied, and threw out additional rooms and bow-windows, and took in more garden, and kept a cow on a bit of Government grass beyond the stores, and—with the man who did the roofs, the Church Orderly, and one or two other-

public characters—came to be reckoned amongst the oldest inhabitants.

George went away pretty soon with his regiment. He was a good, straightforward young fellow, with a dogged devotion to duty, and a certain provincialism of intellect, and general John Bullishness, which he inherited from his father, who had inherited it from his country forefathers. He inherited equally a certain romantic, instinctive, and immovable high-mindedness, not invariably characteristic of much more brilliant men.

He had been very fond of his little cousin, and Leonard's death was a natural grief to him. The funeral tried his fortitude, and his detestation of 'scenes', to the very uttermost.

Like most young men who had the honour to know her, George's devotion to his beautiful and gracious aunt, Lady Jane, had had in it something of the nature of worship; but now he was almost glad he was going away, and not likely to see her face for a long time, because it made him feel miserable to see her, and he objected to feeling miserable both on principle and in practice. His peace of mind was assailed, however, from a wholly unexpected quarter, and one which pursued him even more abroad than at home.

The Barrack Master's son had been shocked by his cousin's death; but the shock was really and truly greater when he discovered, by chance gossip, and certain society indications, that the calamity which left Lady Jane childless had made him his uncle's presumptive heir. The almost physical disgust which the discovery that he had thus acquired some little social prestige produced in this subaltern of a marching regiment must be hard to comprehend by persons of more imagination and less sturdy independence, or by scholars in the science of success. But man differs widely from man, and it is true.

He had been nearly two years in Canada when 'the English mail' caused him to fling his fur cap into the air with such demonstrations of delight as greatly aroused the

curiosity of his comrades, and, as he bolted to his quarters without further explanation than 'Good news from home!' a rumour was for some time current that 'Jones had come into his fortune'.

Safe in his own quarters, he once more applied himself to his mother's letter, and picked up the thread of a passage which ran thus:

Your dear father gets very impatient, and I long to be back in my hut again and see after my flowers, which I can trust to no one since O'Reilly took his discharge. The little conservatory is like a new toy to me, but it is very tiny, and your dear father is worse than no use in it, as he says himself. However, I can't leave Lady Jane till she is quite strong. The baby is a noble little fellow and really beautiful—which I know you won't believe, but that's because you know nothing about babies; not as beautiful as Leonard, of course—that could never be—but a fine, healthy, handsome boy, with eyes that do remind one of his darling brother. I know, dear George, how greatly you always did admire and appreciate your Aunt. Not one bit too much, my son. She is the noblest woman I have ever known. We have had a very happy time together and I pray it may please God to spare this child to be the comfort to her that you are and have been to

Your loving  
MOTHER.

This was the good news from home that had sent the young subaltern's fur cap into the air, and that now sent him to his desk; the last place where, as a rule, he enjoyed himself. Poor scribe as he was, however, he wrote two letters then and there: one to his mother, and one of impetuous congratulations to his uncle, full of messages to Lady Jane.

The Master of the House read the letter more than once. It pleased him.

In his own way he was quite as unworldly as his nephew, but it was chiefly from a philosophic contempt for many things that worldly folk struggle for, and a connoisseurship in sources of pleasure not purchasable except by the mentally endowed, and not even valuable to George, as he knew. And he was a man of the world, and a somewhat cynical student of character.

After the third reading he took it, smiling, to Lady Jane's morning-room, where she was sitting, looking rather pale, with her fine hair 'coming down' over a tea-gown of strange tints of her husband's choosing and with the new baby lying in her lap.

He shut the door noiselessly, took a footstool to her feet, and kissed her hand.

'You look like a Romney, Jane—an unfinished Romney, for you are too white. If you've got a headache, you shan't hear this letter, which I know you'd like to hear.'

'I see that I should. Canada postmarks. It's George.'

'Yes; it's George. He's uproariously delighted at the advent of this little chap.'

'Oh, I knew he'd be that. Let me hear what he says.'

The Master of the House read the letter. Lady Jane's eyes filled with tears at the tender references to Leonard, but she smiled through them.

'He's a dear good fellow.'

'He *is* a dear, good fellow. It's a most *borné* intellect, but excellence itself. And I'm bound to say,' added the Master of the House, driving his hands through the jungle of his hair, 'that there is a certain excellence about a soldier when he is a good fellow that seems to be a thing *per se*.'

After meditating on this matter for some moments, he sprang up and vigorously rang the bell.

'Jane, you're terribly white; you can bear nothing. Nurse is to take that brat at once, and I'm going to carry you into the garden.'

Always much given to the collection and care of precious



things, and apt also to change his fads and to pursue each with partiality for the moment, the Master of the House had, for some time past, been devoting all his thoughts and his theories to the preservation of a possession not less valuable than the paragon of Chippendale chairs, and much more destructible—he was taking care of his good wife.

Many family treasures are lost for lack of a little timely care and cherishing, and there are living 'examples' as rare as most bric-à-brac, and quite as perishable. Lady Jane was one of them, and after Leonard's death, with no motive for keeping up, she sank into a condition of weakness so profound that it became evident that, unless her failing forces were fostered, she would not long be parted from her son.

Her husband had taken up his poem again, to divert his mind from his own grief; but he left it behind, and took Lady Jane abroad.

Once roused, he brought to the task of coaxing her back to life an intelligence that generally insured the success of his aims, and he succeeded now. Lady Jane got well; out of sheer gratitude, she said.

Leonard's military friends do not forget him. They are accustomed to remember the absent.

With the death of his little friend the V.C. quits these pages. He will be found in the pages of history.

The Kapellmeister is a fine organist, and a few musical members of the congregation, of all ranks, have a knack of lingering after Evensong at the Iron Church to hear him 'Play away the people'. But on the Sunday after Leonard's death the congregation rose and remained *en masse* as the 'Dead March' from *Saul* spoke in solemn and familiar tones the requiem of a hero's soul.

Blind Baby's father was a Presbyterian and disapproved of organs, but he was a fond parent, and his blind child had heard tell that the officer who played the organ so grandly was to play the 'Dead March' on the Sabbath evening for the little gentleman that died on the Sabbath previous, and

he was wild to go and hear it. Then the service would be past, and the Kapellmeister was a fellow Scot, and the house of mourning has a powerful attraction for that serious race, and for one reason or another Corporal Macdonald yielded to the point, saying: 'Aweel, if you're a gude bairn, I'll tak ye to the kirk door, and ye may lay your lug at the chink, and hear what ye can.'

But when they got there the door was open, and Blind Baby pushed his way through the crowd, as if the organ had drawn him with a rope, straight to the Kapellmeister's side.

It was the beginning of a friendship much to Blind Baby's advantage, which did not end when the child had been sent to a blind school, and then to a college where he learnt to be a tuner, and 'earned his own living'.

Poor Jemima fretted so bitterly for the loss of the child she had nursed with such devotion, that there was possibly some truth in O'Reilly's rather complicated assertion that he married her because he could not bear to see her cry.

He took his discharge, and was installed by the Master of the House as lodge-keeper at the gates through which he had so often passed as 'a tidy one'.

Freed from military restraints, he became a very untidy one indeed, and grew hair in such reckless abundance that he came to look like an orang-outang with an unusually restrained figure and exceptionally upright carriage.

He was the best of husbands every day in the year but the seventeenth of March; and Jemima enjoyed herself very much as she boasted to the wives of less handy civilians that 'her man was as good as a woman about the house, any day'. (Any day, that is, except the seventeenth of March.)

With window plants cunningly and ornamentally enclosed by a miniature paling and gate, as if the window-sill were a hut garden; with coloured tissue-paper fly-catchers made on the principle of barrack-room Christmas decorations; with shelves, brackets, Oxford frames and other efforts of the decorative joinery of O'Reilly's evenings; with a large, hard

sofa, chairs, elbow-chairs and antimacassars; and with a round table in the middle—the Lodge parlour is not a room to live in, but it is almost bewildering to peep into, and curiously like the shrine of some departed saint, so highly framed are the photographs of Leonard's lovely face, and so numerous are his relics.

The fate of Leonard's dog may not readily be guessed.

The gentle reader would not deem it unnatural were I to chronicle that he died of a broken heart. Failing this excess of sensibility, it seems obvious that he should have attached himself immovably to Lady Jane, and have lived at ease and died full of dignity in his little master's ancestral halls. He did go back there for a short time, but the day after the funeral he disappeared. When word came to the household that he was missing and had not been seen since he was let out in the morning, the butler put on his hat and hurried off with a beating heart to Leonard's grave.

But The Sweep was not there, dead or alive. He was at that moment going at a sling trot along the dusty road that led into the Camp. Timid persons, imperfectly acquainted with dogs, avoided him; he went so very straight, it looked like hydrophobia; men who knew better, and saw that he was only 'on urgent private affairs', chaffed him as they passed, and some with little canes and horseplay waylaid and tried to intercept him. But he was a big dog, and made himself respected, and pursued his way.

His way was to the Barrack Master's hut.

The first room he went into was that in which Leonard died. He did not stay there three minutes. Then he went to Leonard's own room, the little one next to the kitchen, and this he examined exhaustively, crawling under the bed, snuffing at both doors, and lifting his long nose against hope to investigate impossible places, such as the top of the military chest of drawers. Then he got on to the late General's camp-bed and went to sleep.

He was awakened by the smell of the bacon frying for

breakfast, and he had breakfast with the family. After this he went out, and was seen by different persons at various places in the Camp, the General Parade, the Stores and the Iron Church, still searching.

He was invited to dinner in at least twenty different barrack-rooms, but he rejected all overtures till he met O'Reilly, when he turned round and went back to dine with him and his comrades.

He searched Leonard's room once more, and not finding him he refused to make his home with the Barrack Master; possibly because he could not make up his mind to have a home at all till he could have one with Leonard.

Half a dozen of Leonard's officer friends would willingly have adopted him, but he would not own another master. Then military dogs are apt to attach themselves exclusively either to commissioned or to non-commissioned soldiers, and The Sweep cast in his lot with the men, and slept on old coats in corners of barrack-rooms, and bided his time. Dog's masters do get called away suddenly and *come back again*. The Sweep had his hopes, and did not commit himself.

Even if, at length, he realized that Leonard had passed beyond this life's outposts, it roused in him no instincts to return to the Hall. With a somewhat sublime contempt for those shreds of poor mortality laid to rest in the family vault, he elected to live where his little master had been happiest—in Asholt Camp.

Now and then he became excited. It was when a fresh regiment marched in. On these occasions he invariably made so exhaustive an examination of the regiment and its baggage, as led to his being more or less forcibly adopted by half a dozen good-natured soldiers who had had to leave their previous pets behind them. But when he found that Leonard had not returned with that detachment, he shook off everybody and went back to O'Reilly.

When O'Reilly married, he took The Sweep to the Lodge, who thereupon instituted a search about the house

and grounds; but it was evident that he had not expected any good results, and when he did not find Leonard he went away quickly down the old Elm Avenue. As he passed along the dusty road that led to Camp for the last time, he looked back now and again with sad eyes to see if O'Reilly was not coming too. Then he returned to the barrack-room, where he was greeted with uproarious welcome, and eventually presented with a new collar by subscription. And so, rising with gun-fire and resting with 'lights out', he lived and died a Soldier's Dog.

The new heir thrives at the Hall. He has brothers and sisters to complete the natural happiness of his home, he has good health, good parents, and is having a good education. He will have a goodly heritage. He is developing nearly as vigorous a fancy for soldiers as Leonard had, and drills his brothers and sisters with the help of O'Reilly. If he wishes to make arms his profession he will not be thwarted, for the Master of the House has decided that it is in many respects a desirable and wholesome career for an eldest son. Lady Jane may yet have to buckle on a hero's sword. Brought up by such a mother in the fear of God, he ought to be good, he may live to be great, it's odds if he cannot be happy. But never, not in the 'one crowded hour of glorious' victory, not in years of the softest comforts of a peaceful home, by no virtues and in no success shall he bear more fitly than his crippled brother bore the ancient motto of their house:

**Lætus Sorte Mea.**



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